Desierto faces key impeachment vote today

STORY ON PAGE A2

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2001 ★ 48 PAGES 3 SECTIONS VOL.17 NO. 10 P15

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Gov't debt soars to ₱2.32T**
  BUSINESS / B1
- **500 Nur men to surrender**
  ACROSS / A16
- **Slay umbrella traced to Strunk**
  METRO / A23
- **Tiger magic returns**
  SPORTS / A20

Junior Inquirer cops award

By Eline Santos

IT'S no longer "just" for kids.

The adults have taken notice of the weekly Junior Inquirer (JI) and awarding it the "Outstanding

JUNIOR/ A6

Gloria gags Cabinet

Palace flip-flops on Nur's return

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

MALACAÑANG yesterday continued to flip-flop on its stand regarding renegade Moro leader Nur Misuari, this time saying that sending him to exile in a third country was a "real option."

Rigoberto Tiglao, spokesperson for President Macapagal-Arroyo, said such an arrangement would "provide dignity" to the 60-year-old ex-governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao who is facing rebellion charges here.

"If ever, that's a real option," Tiglao said at a press briefing. But he added that such a development "will have to be with the clearance of the Philippine government," and that Misuari would also have to promise to stay in the chosen country.

The President said early on that Malaysia could continue to detain Misuari, who was arrested for ille-

PALACE FLIP-FLOPS/ A6

Thai whiz develops cyber 'katol'

BANGKOK—A Thai software site has launched a downloadable computer program which it says will keep mosquitoes at bay by emitting a low-frequency sound from computer speakers.

Thaiware.com programmer Saranyou Punyaratabunbhu said his Anti-Mosquitoes Program (www.thaiware.com/software/util/UL00608.htm) produces a sound which is inaudible to humans but which hampers the irritating insects' ability to fly.

The free software has already been downloaded 16,000 times, according to its website written mostly in Thai. (The program is also in Thai.)

"Instead of having to plug in extra mosquito killers, you could just use your computer to drive them away," Saranyou told The Nation newspaper, adding that he was inspired by existing devices that used the same concept.

"You'd just be using your computer for more purposes than usual," he added.

THAI/ A18

PHOTO BY JIM GUIA PUNZALAN; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LYNETT VILLARIBA

A HARD nut to crack, Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. appears in this PDI digital composition to have thrown wide open the Palace gates to view as a major investment the $540-million buy-in by a Japanese brewer into San Miguel Corp.

Camacho asked to evaluate Kirin-SMC deal

By Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has asked Cabinet members opposed to the sale of 15 percent of San Miguel Corp. to Japanese brewer Kirin Co. Ltd. to withhold public comment.

Ms Macapagal wants the officials to instead raise their objections in today's Cabinet meeting, which will focus on the sale brokered by SMC chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., according to presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao.

"She would like to caution Cabinet members who have been quoted so often to discuss the matter before the Cabinet," Tiglao said.

The President has designated Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho as the lead official in evaluating the sale valued at $540 million.

Ms Macapagal told reporters in a chance interview that Camacho would be "in charge of working out what is the internationally acceptable, as well as optimally beneficial to farmers or a combination for the prospective entry of Kirin."

An official of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) has voiced objections to the terms of the deal, especially the five-year lock-up period involving a "voting right trust agreement" in which Kirin will vote with Cojuangco.

PCGG Commissioner Ruben Carranza said the PCGG was also objecting to the lack of transparency in the transaction, dilution of government shares and transfer of effective control of SMC to Cojuangco.

Tiglao said the Cabinet would evaluate warn-

GLORIA/ A18

Palace team to decide how to spend ₱130B

By Norman Bordadora
and Carlito Pablo

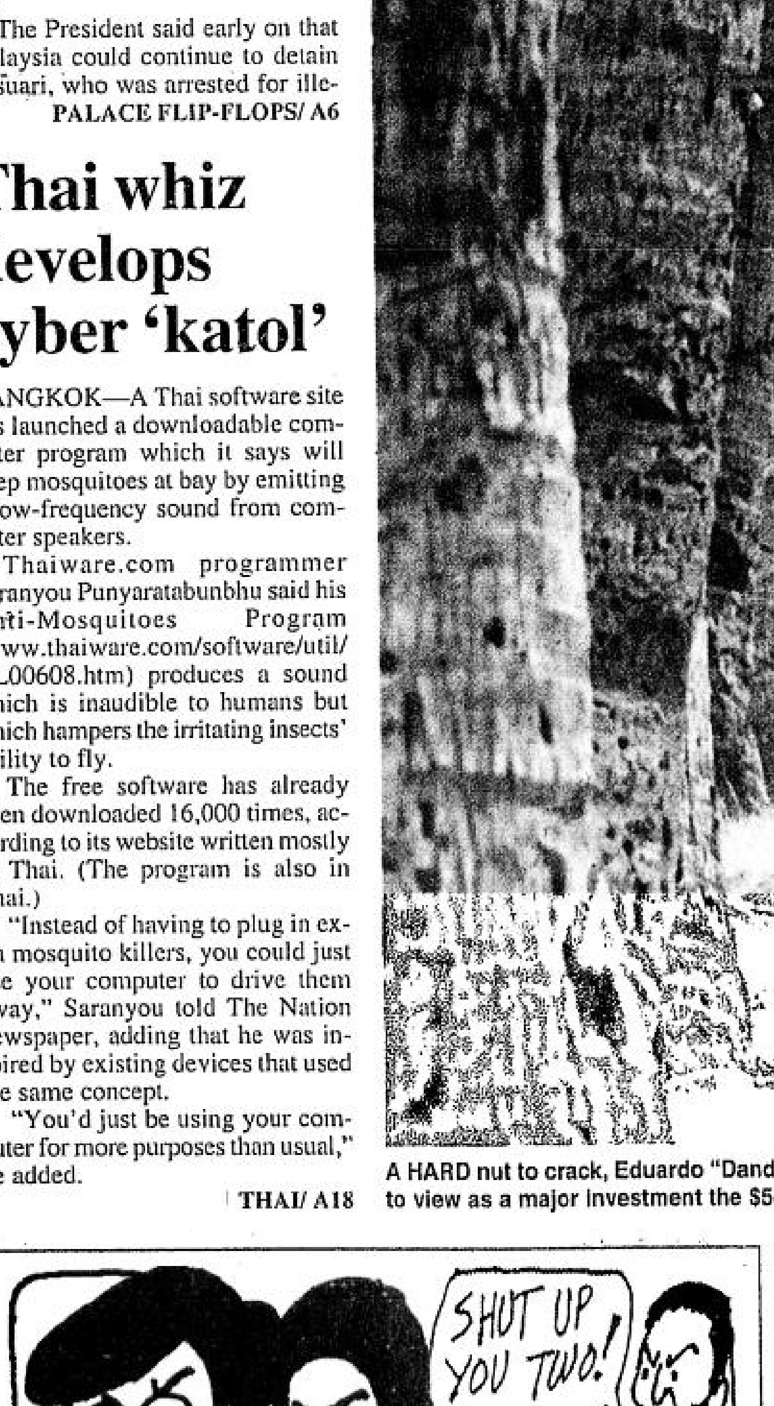
MALACAÑANG is forming a team to determine how the estimated P130 billion in coconut levy funds can benefit coconut farmers and workers, but former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile wants Congress to pass a law specifying the use of the funds.

Enrile noted that the Supreme Court, which ruled on Friday that the coco levy funds were "prima facie (apparently) public funds," did not specify where the funds would go, making lawsuits from private claimants possible.

"I propose a congressional action that will define where the funds will go," Enrile said at the Kapihan at the Manila Hotel.

Asked for comment on Enrile's proposal, Sen. Joker Arroyo, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, said a congressional action was the

PALACE TEAM/ A18



SHUT UP YOU TWO!

Shut up, film director tells whining Estradas

By Volt Contreras

JOSEPH and Jinggoy Estrada's continued demands for special medical privileges while in detention have raised the hackles of film and stage director Behn Cervantes, one of the convenors of Plunder Watch.

Cervantes contrasted the

SHUT UP/ A19

US flag raised in Kabul embassy

KABUL—US Marines yesterday raised the Stars and Stripes over the US Embassy in Kabul for the first time since 1989, a day after the last al-Qaida fortress in Tora Bora fell to US-backed Afghan tribal fighters.

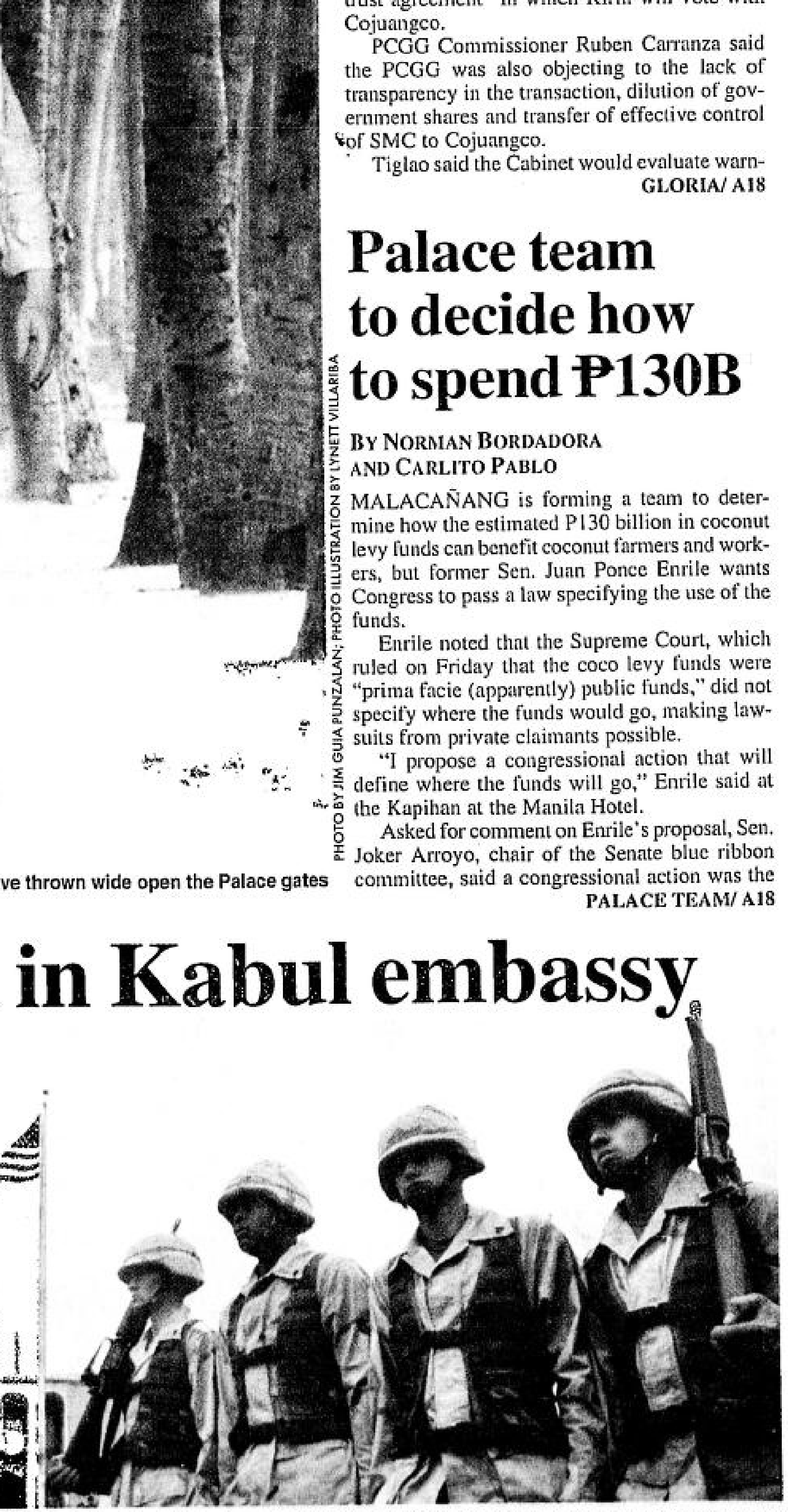
"Today's ceremony symbolizes the return—after more than a decade of absence—of the United States to Afghanistan," US envoy James F. Dobbins said as he presided over the rain-soaked flag ceremony on the embassy's courtyard.

"We are here, and we are here to stay," Dobbins told a small crowd of invited guests, including incoming Defense Minister Mohammed Fahin who represented the new Afghan government.

To the strains of the US national anthem piped over a sound system, a Marine honor guard carried the flag forward and then carefully hoisted it—the same flag that had flown over the embassy when it was evacuated on Jan. 31, 1989.

US/ A18

World without borders



OLD GLORY flies high at the US Embassy in Kabul for the first time since 1989 to signify the return of American diplomatic presence.

REUTERS

Second **FRONT PAGE**

TULOY O HINDI? ABANGAN!

Gov't urged: Stop borrowing splurge

SEN. Teresa Aquino-Oreta yesterday said the government should stop its "borrowing splurge" in favor of better and more efficient tax collection in order to plug revenue "leakages" amounting to from P74 billion to P242 billion a year.

Oreta was reacting to reports that the country's debt rose by P37.6 billion in the month of September alone.

"If only Malacañang's finance and economic team would be as aggressive in exploring innovative ways to plug revenue loopholes and collect delinquent taxes as they are in pushing Filipinos into a debt trap, there w[illegible] l really be no need for government to resort to a [illegible] owing splurge," Oreta said.

Oreta said [illegible] tax collection leaks, in the form of delinquent o[illegible] unpaid taxes, were costing the government from P74 billion to P242 billion a year.

The Asian Development Bank has suggested that the Philippines improve tax collection efficiency to raise revenues and tame the budget deficit instead of competing with the private sector in borrowing funds from the domestic and foreign markets.

Oreta said the government should cut non-essential expenditures, impose tighter rules and mechanisms to improve collection and broaden the tax base, and act tough against corruption in revenue centers like the internal revenue and customs bureaus. *Cynthia D. Balana*

Desierto faces key impeach vote today

BY CHRISTINE AVENDAÑO

EXPECT fireworks when the House committee on justice convenes today to decide on the "most crucial" stage of the impeachment complaint against Ombudsman Aniano Desierto.

"It's a crucial meeting because we will determine whether the impeachment complaint against Desierto lives or dies," said Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan, the committee chair.

The 58-member justice committee will vote today on whether the complaint filed by lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr. against Desierto, whom he accused of taking a bribe in 1997, is "sufficient in substance."

While the committee meets today, members of Akbayan and Gomburza led by running priest Fr. Robert Reyes are to hold a picket in Congress to press for the immediate investigation of Desierto.

Last week, the committee voted Francisco's complaint to be "sufficient in form," that is, to have been properly filed and endorsed, paving the way for today's voting.

Francisco, who is a former lawyer of the Accra law firm, claimed to be an active participant in the alleged bribery of Desierto by a former client, businessman Luke Roxas, in 1997.

He claimed that Roxas had bribed Desierto with P273,000 worth of video camera parts and P500,000 in cash in exchange for agreeing to sit on an investigation of Roxas' bank.

Committee assessment

Rep. Neptali Gonzales II, the majority leader and chair of the rules committee, said justice committee members would assess Francisco's charges today by "pure appreciation of the complaint filed (by Francisco) and the annexes attached to it."

There is no need for Desierto to answer the charges or for Francisco to substantiate his at this stage.

If majority of the committee members say that Francisco's complaint was sufficient in substance, then the committee would require Desierto to answer the charges and also give Francisco the chance to counter the Ombudsman's answer, according to Gonzales.

The committee would then investigate the charges against Desierto by holding hearings.

But if the majority of the members reject Francisco's complaint as insufficient in substance, then the committee will make a report on its findings to be submitted to the plenary for approval.

The vote of one-third of the members of the House can overturn the committee's findings and thus authorize the holding of a formal investigation.

Otherwise, the complaint would be deemed dismissed, said Gonzales.

Big debate

Libanan and Gonzales, in separate interviews yesterday, said they expect a big debate in the committee today on how to go about voting on Francisco's complaint.

Gonzales said it was possible the question of whose votes would be counted as constituting the majority would be raised again.

This became an issue in a meeting of the committee last week.

Libanan ruled that majority constitute 50 percent of regular members of the committee and those ex-officio members present at the meeting.

Also, today's meeting could show whether committee members are divided on whether to support the complaint or not.

A congressman who asked not to be quoted observed that in last week's vote on whether the complaint was sufficient in form, 34 voted in favor, three voted against and one abstained.

"If that is an indication, then we will see such division (today)," the congressman said.

Common sense

Surigao del Sur Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, one of six congressmen to endorse Francisco's complaint, said he believes using "common sense" should be the guiding factor in making today's crucial vote.

"I read the affidavit (of Francisco) and concluded that it was worthy to pursue an investigation," he said.

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ABU SAYYAF HOSTAGES

Military misses deadline; Gloria understands–Tiglao

BY DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN
AND MARTIN P. MARFIL

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is not losing her patience with the military for taking too long to rescue the three hostages still in Abu Sayyaf hands, her spokesperson said yesterday.

Rigoberto Tiglao said the President understands that the military is hampered by the harsh jungle terrain of Basilan.

"She recognizes the difficulties the military is facing, the battleground is very difficult. (The Abu Sayyaf) can easily escape by disguising themselves as civilians," Tiglao said.

AFP Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Cimatu remains confident, however, that the military would be able to rescue the hostages—American missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipino nurse Deborah Yap—before Christmas.

"We've been having bad weather here. The troops have imposed a target date and they have launched 'Oplan Simbang Gabi,' which means that starting Dec. 16, they'll continue to scour Basilan to rescue the hostages," Cimatu said.

The three were seized from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan last May and are the last of 22 hostages originally kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf.

"Our problem is we can't carpet bomb Basilan. We can't fire mortar indiscriminately there, not only because of the hostages but because there are civilians in the area," Tiglao said.

He likened the military's difficulties to that of the United States in Afghanistan, which has a mostly desert terrain.

"We have the biggest superpower bombing the (Taliban) strongholds with all the high-tech equipment, still they haven't been able to capture (suspected terrorist Osama) bin Laden," Tiglao said.

On Wednesday, the military arrested a suspected member of the Abu Sayyaf who was believed recruited into the terrorist group by its founder, Abdujarak Janjalani.

A belated report reaching Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City said military agents picked up Namer Reyes Jameri, 38, at around 2 p.m. on Ridjiki Blvd. in Bongao, Tawi Tawi.

The report said Jameri tried to grab the rifle of one of the agents but was subdued and taken to the 39th Marine Co. headquarters in the same town.

Jameri, the report said, was a member of the "Tabligh" operating under Khadafy Janjalani.

He was reportedly recruited into the Abu Sayyaf by Abdurajak Janjalani himself in 1989 in Isabela, Basilan.

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Big 3, new players cut oil prices anew

BY RONNEL W. DOMINGO

BEGINNING at midnight last night, the three oil majors as well as two new petroleum firms slashed the prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 30 centavos per liter and of liquefied petroleum gas by P1 per kilogram, following the lead of two new players late last week.

Refining giant Petron Corp. was the first to announce the rollback citing the continued weakening of international crude prices.

Last night's price cuts were the 11th this year and the sixth since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

Prices were last reduced on Dec. 3.

Between then and Dec. 13, crude prices averaged $17.46 per barrel while the peso hovered at P51.99 to the dollar.

Last month, crude prices averaged $17.66 per barrel while the peso stood at the same P51.99 average.

Petron corporate communications manager Virginia Ruivivar said that since September, prices of gasoline and diesel had slid by P1.88 and P1.53 per liter, respectively.

Ruivivar added that retail prices of Petron's Gasul went down to between P238 and P249 per 11-kg cylinder.

Following Petron's announcement, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Caltex Phil., TotalFinaElf Phil. and Eastern Petroleum Corp. said they would match Petron's price changes.

Caltex said it has not decided on whether to reduce its LPG prices.

New players Flying V and Seaoil Petroleum Corp. started the latest round of price rollbacks last Saturday.

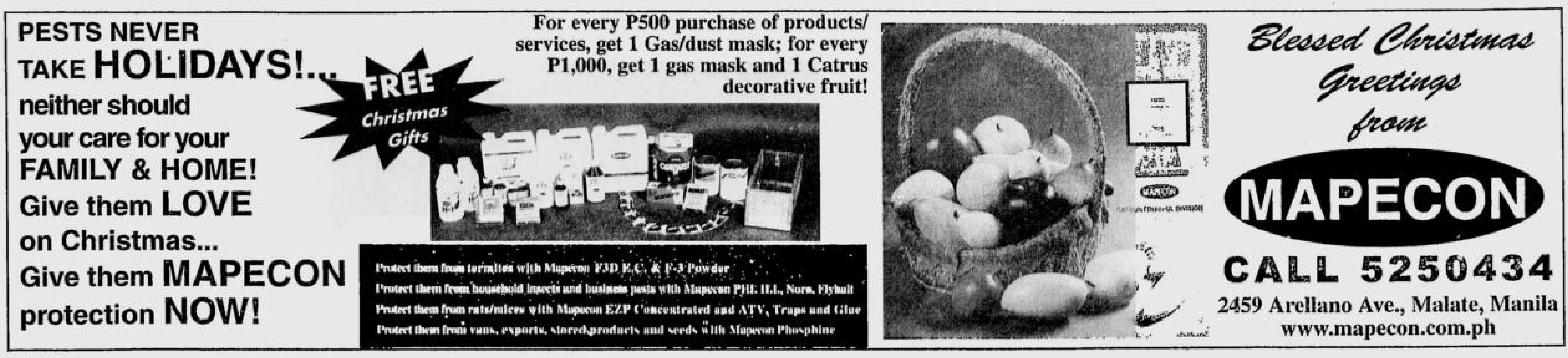
Energy Secretary Vicente Perez Jr. said the continued slide of petroleum prices should now be reflected in related services like transport.

Energy department computations showed that a private motorist could save some P250 a month with the price rollbacks.

A jeepney driver on the other hand could save a much as P2,600 a month.

"Before the price cuts, a jeepney driver usually consumed about P840 for a full tank, which is used up within a day," Perez said.

But with the series of reductions, a full tank for a public utility vehicle now costs about P753.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Palace to back bill vs terrorism

CONGRESS is set to enact a law against terrorism early next year, Malacañang yesterday said.

In an official statement, the Palace said the law will "define terrorism, differentiate it from rebellion and make it a non-bailable offense."

The statement said the passage of such law was one of the recommendations made in a pact signed during the recent National Socio-Economic Summit of 2001.

"This particular item under the peace, order and security portion of the pact is part of the country's response to the global fight against terrorism resulting from the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States," Malacañang said.

The Palace said the proposed legislation will be calendared for debate during the first quarter of 2002 by the committees of public order and security of both the House and Senate.

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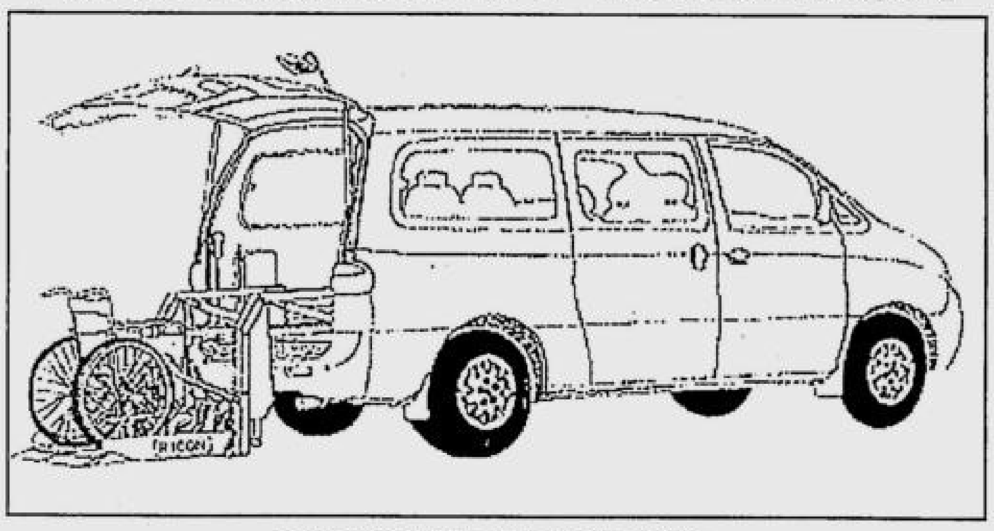

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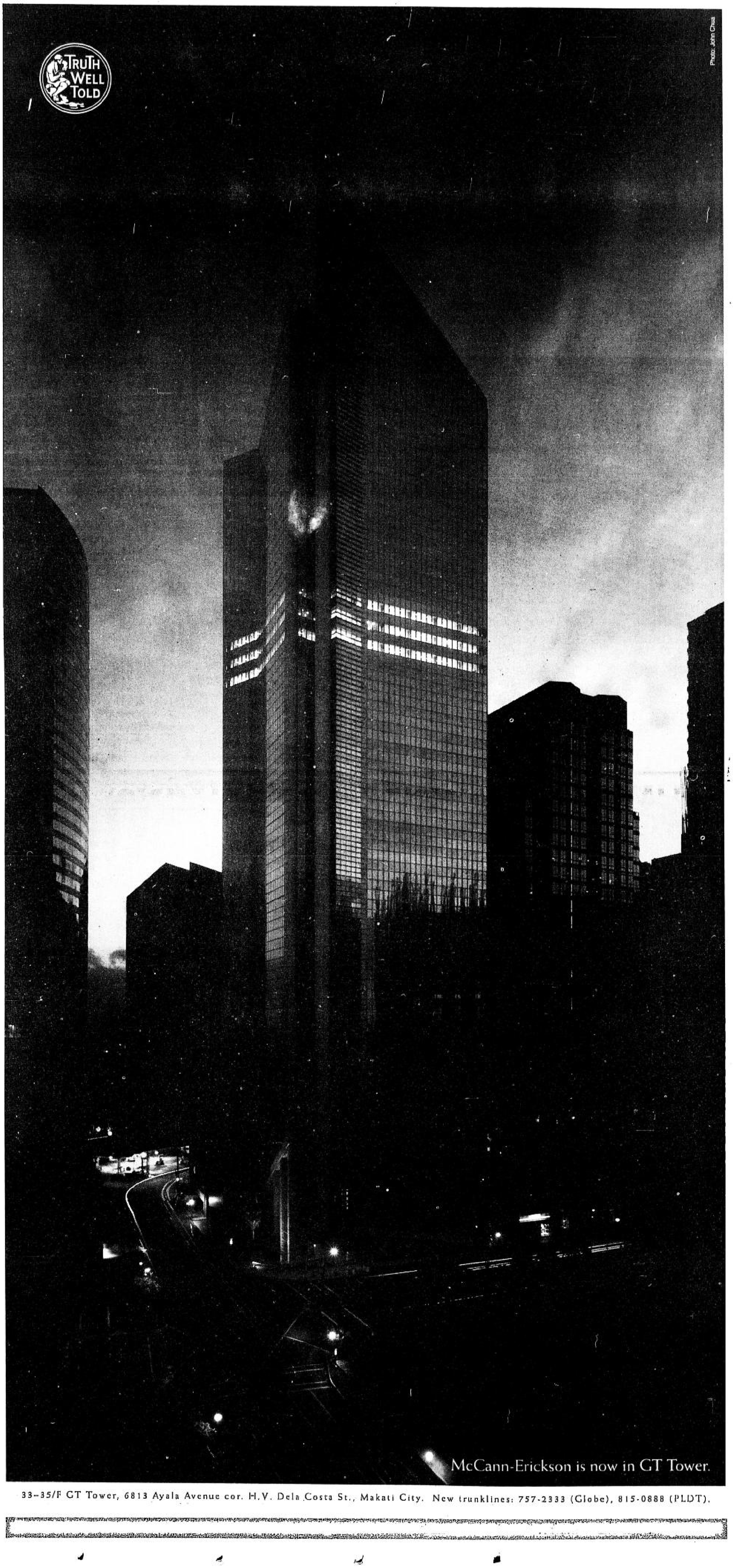

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Army chief doubts NPA sincerity

BY MARTIN P. MARFIL

ARMY chief Lt. Gen. Jaime de los Santos questioned yesterday the sincerity of the New People's Army in keeping the truce, saying he expects the rebels to launch offensives on Dec. 26, the founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

De los Santos made the remark after communist leader Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal announced that the NPA ceasefire would end on Jan. 6, the same date as the government's truce.

The NPA ceasefire started Dec. 15, while the government began its truce on Dec. 10.

"In the papers, they said they reduced it by nine days. Anyway, whether they reduced it or not, the issue is the sincerity on the part of the NDF (National Democratic Front). Before that (truce), they committed (atrocities)," De los Santos, speaking in Taglish, told defense reporters.

The NDF is the umbrella organization of most rebel groups in the country.

De los Santos cited the Dec. 11 torching of a bus in Cebu and the Dec. 12 killing of an Army captain in Aurora province reportedly by the NPA. "All of these show they (NPA) are not sincere in what they are saying," he said.

De los Santos said the NPA is expected to launch attacks against the government on Dec. 26 to mark the anniversary of the CPP.

"They are testing our resolve. Usually, they conduct atrocities during their anniversary; but this should not be cause for worry as the military remains vigilant," he said.

But for a senior aide to President Macapagal-Arroyo, the NPA attacks amid a Christmas truce indicate a possible split in the insurgent leadership.

Agence France Presse reported that retired general Eduardo Ermita, presidential adviser on peace negotiations with Muslim and communist guerrilla groups, said yesterday the attacks suggest "the people at the top may not be in control of their people on the ground."

The government is currently holding informal consultations with the NDF leadership living in exile in the Netherlands, with a view to restarting peace talks that were halted in June.

"We've received information that other factions may have their own motives for trying to disrupt the negotiations," Ermita had said in a television interview. ***With an AFP report***

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 18, 2001
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: **Jer 23:5-8**
Gospel: **Mt 1:18-24**

This is how Jesus Christ was born. Mary his mother had been given to Joseph in marriage but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph, her husband, made plans to divorce her in all secrecy. He was an upright man, and in no way did he want to discredit her.

While he was pondering over this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit, and now she will bear a son. You shall call him 'Jesus' for he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called Emmanuel* which means: God-with-us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do and he took his wife to his home.

Commentary

Many people find it difficult to accept Mary's virginity. But we can't simply ignore the events that have taken place. It is a very ancient information, perhaps even prior to St. Matthew. The authenticity of the tradition is underscored on account of its novelty to the Jewish world. Now that the world we live in is somewhat confused on the matter of sexuality and other issues, the Gospel has something to offer us. Sexuality, it seems, is not that essential to the development of a person. What is more important is to heed the call of God and respond to Him with everything we have. This was how Joseph and Mary attained their plenitude, by remaining faithful to God's will for them.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—*Res judicata*—*Res judicata* or bar by prior judgment is a doctrine which holds that a matter that has been adjudicated by a court of competent jurisdiction must be deemed to have been finally and conclusively settled if it arises in any subsequent litigation between the same parties and for the same cause. Thus, a final judgment on the merits rendered by a court of competent jurisdiction is conclusive as to the rights of the parties and their privies and constitutes an absolute bar to subsequent actions involving the same claim, demand, or cause of action. *Res judicata* is based on the ground that the party to be affected, or some other with whom he is in privity, has litigated the same matter in a former action in a court of competent jurisdiction, and should not be permitted to litigate it again. It frees the parties from undergoing all over again the rigors of unnecessary suits and repetitive trials. At the same time, it prevents the clogging of court dockets. Equally important, it stabilizes rights and promotes the rule of law. For the doctrine to apply, four requisites must be met: (1) the former judgment or order must be final; (2) it must be a judgment or an order on the merits; (3) it must have been rendered by a court having jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties; and (4) there must be, between the first and the second actions, identity of parties, of subject matter and of cause of action. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Panganiban, Third Division, Development Bank of the Philippines v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 110203, May 9, 2001]

DIGEST BY R.B. VERA

Illegal OFWs down since '96

FILIPINOS who have illegally sought work and dwelling abroad have decreased in the last five years, said the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Owwa administrator Wilhelm Soriano said the number of undocumented overseas Filipino workers was down by at least 1.5 million after the government launched its documentation program in different countries in 1996.

Soriano said OFWs who managed to get out of the country without proper documentation from the Philippine Overseas Workers Administration have registered through the voluntary membership program on-site (VMP).

The VMP on-site allows unregistered Filipinos who have achieved either alien or legitimate status in other countries to register with the Owwa through offices or booths situated in key cities around the world.

Soriano said there was "no way" the government can monitor the presence of undocumented Filipinos abroad unless they come out and register in the VMP on-site.

"We don't know how many they are precisely because they did not register with the government when they went out of the country to work," Soriano said in an earlier interview.

"But we're sure that there are more undocumented Filipinos than those who went through the process with the POEA or Owwa," he said.

Owwa records show that there are seven million documented Filipinos working abroad. Of these, two million are in Canada and the United States while the rest are spread mostly in the Middle East and Europe.

The government receives around $8 billion in remittances annually from OFWs, who regularly send money to their families here.

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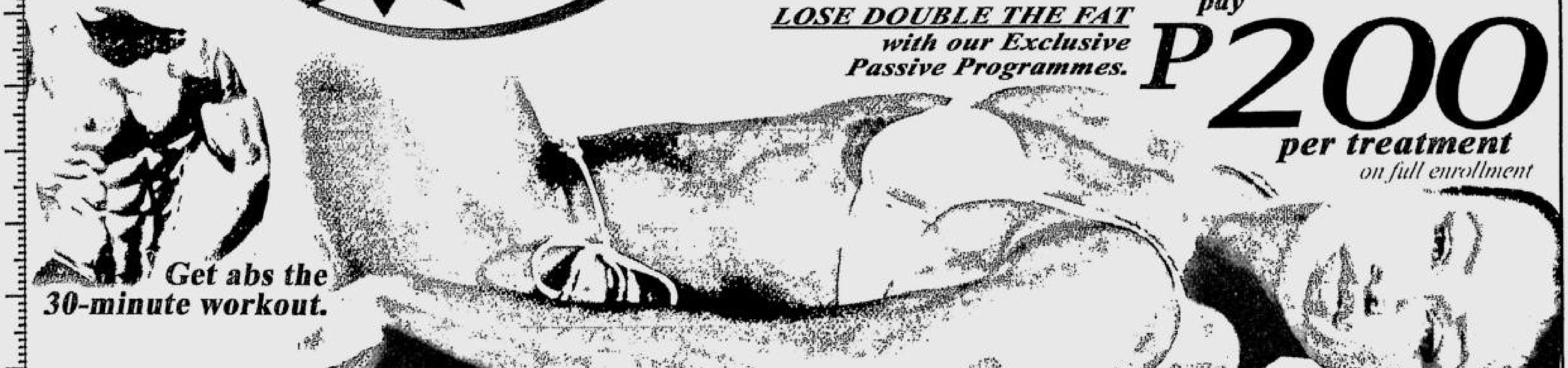

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Palace flip-flops on Nur's return to RP

(From page A1)

gal entry in Sabah on Nov. 24. Later she said her administration was prepared to take him back when Malaysia deported him.

On Thursday she said she had sent Norberto Gonzales, her adviser on special concerns, to "back-channel" with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad regarding preparations for Misuari's arrest after his deportation. But on Sunday Mahathir denied meeting with Gonzales.

The President said in an interview yesterday afternoon in North Tala, Caloocan, that Misuari would not be deported until next year.

She hinted that she was still weighing her options, saying: "In any case I will be able to announce the government's plans for Misuari after the New Year."

Gonzales said in a separate interview that Misuari might be deported in the first few days of January.

"That's the date we're looking at since (Dec.) 24 is a formality," he said. "We can take Nur into custody by the 24th, but since it's the holidays, (his detention in Malaysia) may be extended until the opening of the (next) year depending on the arrangements."

Dec. 24 marks the end of the 30-day period within which Malaysia may legally hold Misuari.

In Kuala Lumpur, the Bernama news agency quoted Philippine Ambassador Jose Brillantes as saying yesterday that while "the date is better kept confidential for security reasons," Misuari might be deported before Dec. 24 "if we go by Malaysia's immigration laws."

But when asked to comment on this remark, Mahathir said: "We have yet to decide a date. We'll wait and discuss (with Manila)."

The two men spoke separately to reporters at Mahathir's official residence in Putrajaya during the Eid'l Fitr celebrations.

Tiglao, however, said the government would allow Misuari's exile "when the option seems to be the best for us, and to provide dignity to (him)."

"But right now there's no plan yet," Tiglao added. "The best and most realistic option following the rule of law is for him to be brought back here and face the charges."

Dec. 20 meeting

The President is scheduled to meet with Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr. Nur Hassan Wirajuda on Dec. 20.

With Indonesia as chair of the Organization of Islamic Conference's Committee of the Eight, Wirajuda is expected to convey the committee's consensus regarding Misuari. The other members are Malaysia, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Bangladesh, Senegal and Somalia.

"We will make our decision (based on) consensus because the Philippine government is not the only one with an interest in Misuari's case," Gonzales said.

He also said over radio dzMM that it would be best to wait for the outcome of the President's meeting with Wirajuda, and that "we can deal with Misuari after the holidays."

The OIC, through the Committee of the Six (expanded into the Committee of the Eight last year) brokered the 1996 peace agreement between the Philippine government and the then Misuari-led Moro National Liberation Front.

On Sunday, Mahathir said they would let Misuari leave for another country if the Philippine government refused to take him back after Dec. 24.

Asked to comment, Tiglao said: "What I can say is, this administration is in close touch with Malaysian authorities . . . Any move on the part of the Malaysians is coordinated with us."

Gonzales said the government was also considering the supposed appeal of Moro Islamic Liberation Front chair Salamat Hashim to the OIC to take custody of Misuari—an appeal, however, that the President said she had not seen.

"Those are important points that need to be considered (but) I think the intention of all the parties is not to allow Nur Misuari to get away with what he did," Gonzales said.

On Nov. 19, Misuari's armed followers in the MNLF attacked the military in Jolo and Zamboanga City in an apparent effort to prevent the holding of the ARMM elections. More than 100 civilians were killed in the cross fire.

Consensus

Justice Secretary Hernando Perez said in an interview over dzRH that the "consensus" was for Misuari to be deported to Manila on or before Dec. 24.

He reiterated an earlier announcement by National Security Adviser Roilo Golez that a team had been formed to take custody of Misuari after deportation.

He said the team was composed of himself and ranking officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Armed Forces and Philippine National Police.

"We discussed that we really have to get Misuari," Perez said. "There were back-chanellings here . . . (to) discuss when (to fetch) him. What we have discussed so far is (to fetch) him either on Dec. 24 or before the 24th."

Asked whether Malaysia was pressuring the Philippines to take back Misuari, Perez said: "Not really. What we are talking about is when (to deport him). I was the one who said that Misuari should be sent back to Manila to face the charges filed against him."

Philippine authorities are considering holding Misuari in a detention facility at Fort Magsaysay in Laur, Nueva Ecija.

Perez said Misuari and seven of his associates were facing rebellion charges filed with the metropolitan trial court (MTC) in Jolo.

The case was filed by the chief of the Jolo Police Station.

"We have asked the (court) to (remand) the case to the Department of Justice for preliminary investigation," Perez said. "If there's enough evidence, the case will be filed before the regional trial court, and only then can we ask for a change of venue."

'Wishy-washy'

Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta yesterday assailed the government for what she said was its "wishy-washy" handling of Misuari's case.

Oreta said she was surprised at reports that the government had yet to send an official request to Kuala Lumpur to have Misuari deported when Malacañang officials had been claiming that the protocols for Misuari's return to the Philippines were being prepared.

"Even if Prime Minister Mahathir had not personally met with him, Gonzales would have informed the appropriate authorities in Malaysia about the government's plan involving Misuari," Oreta said. "But . . . it looks like Gonzales has yet to accomplish his mission."

Oreta said that while Misuari might be considered a security threat, the government must not allow him to dodge the rebellion and graft charges filed against him.

"The problem plaguing Malacañang (regarding) Misuari could have been avoided had the government steered clear of a wishy-washy stance . . . and acted resolutely to bring him home right after (his arrest)," she said. ***With reports from Norman Bordadora, Michael Lim Ubac, Cynthia D. Balana, AFP***

Junior Inquirer grows up, cops award

(From page A1)

Children's Newspaper" during the first Unicef-PPI Child-Friendly Newspaper and Journalist Awards to be held on Dec. 18, 2001.

A joint project of the Unicef, Philippine Press Institute (PPI), Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) and Philippine Information Agency (PIA), the child-friendly press awards were conceptualized to encourage journalists to be catalysts and advocates of child rights.

Initially, JI was not even in the running.

"When the awards were conceived, there was no category for outstanding children's newspaper. During the deliberation of the board of judges, JI stood out so they decided to create another award," recalled Ms Ann C. Lopez, AIJC Associate Director and Awards Project Manager.

"JI stood out for exemplary commitment to produce a newspaper for children and of children. A really singular effort."

"It's about time JI was taken seriously," said JI editor in chief Natasha Vizcarra, recalling how people often made the mistake of not taking something seriously because it's "just" for kids.

Asked how JI is child-friendly, Vizcarra was quick to say that, "We're more than that.

"This one is a version for young children of the Philippine Daily Inquirer. I think it won because it's really written with children in mind. JI was conceived with children in mind."

Like saying water is wet

In other words, for JI to be called child-friendly is like saying water is wet.

JI was the "baby" of PDI president/CEO, Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez when she was still the executive vice president. Wilbur Victoria was its first editor in chief.

For Vizcarra, the award is an affirmation of the paper, the talents and opinions of "so many young people who have written for the paper" and expressed their hopes and dreams in it.

"It affirms the work of grown-ups who chose to use their talent to make something for these young people."

One of these grown-ups is Christine Rivero, who had been JI's writer for the past three years until last September. Rivero won as best feature writer on children in the national newspaper category.

The other awardees are: Today (national newspaper category); Sun Star Cebu (community daily category) and Weekend (community weekly category).

Aside from Rivero, the other individual winners include Stella Estremera, best feature writer on children in the community weekly category and Macie Mandigo, outstanding child writer.

Carolyn Arguillas, former chief of the PDI Mindanao Bureau, won the award for outstanding story on children with her Nov. 26, 2000 article "And when they see the stars, they will remember," a feature on Kids for Peace.

Special citations

Special citations as Best Column Writers on Children were given to Eric Mallonga for the national newspaper category and Jaime Biron Polo for the community daily category. Jesus Manuel Torrento was also cited as best feature writer on children in the community daily category.

The board of judges was composed of Alice Colet Villadolid, chair, lawyer Felipe Gozon, Lorna Kalaw Tirol, Dr. Lina Diaz de Rivera, and Dr. Teresa Stuart

Adult staff

Other grown-ups on the JI team include Marlet Salazar, Ernie Sambo, Stephanie Bravo, Albert Rodriguez, Lynett Villariba, Genie Lagman and Kenny Nuyda.

But what good are all these grown-ups without the readers?

"We take our readers very seriously," Vizcarra says. "Basic respect can go such a long way. We try to give kids a voice but in different ways."

Empowering

"We have sections like journal pages," which she explained is very important because "(as) other children get a peek into the world of their peers, where they read about the experiences of other kids and their experiences are affirmed. I think that's very empowering."

From feeling proud of their section in school to what it's like being the eldest, youngest or a middle child in the family, kids can talk about anything and everything that concerns them.

When children tell Vizcarra about how good they felt when their poem was published, or how proud they were when a clipping of their article was displayed in school, "It reminds me my job is not just an office job," as she confessed that, "the routine can get to you sometimes."

"It's a very important job . . . it impacts on a lot of lives . . . parents . . . schools."

Vizcarra knows first-hand the impact of a writer on a very young mind. As a little girl, she herself enjoyed the stories of Hans Christian Andersen so much that she wanted to thank him in person. But of course, the man had been dead for over a hundred years or so. Instead she resolved to be a writer and give back the joy that she had received.

Vizcarra was appointed to manage JI in July, 1996.

Letters

"Your articles are so good. I read them twice sometimes," wrote Rocky Montances in last year's anniversary issue.

Roanna Reyes on the other hand thanked PDI for "having a section for kids to express their opinions. I hope you too, reader, will make your voices heard! Although we're just kids, it doesn't mean we shouldn't speak out."

Editorial assistant Marlet Salazar said that she has learned to interact with different children because of her job.

According to her, people sometimes shrug off the paper as "JI *lang 'yan.*" But then, they don't see the number of letters JI receives from its readers. The readers take JI seriously.

"At first they were discouraging me from taking the job," Vizcarra recalled people's reactions to her decision to apply for the JI's top post. A professor told her, "You'll get stuck there," while fellow reporters thought of the transfer as a demotion.

Before JI, Vizcarra said she had "illusions" of being a hard-hitting news reporter. A journalism graduate of the University of the Philippines, she was a news reporter for the INQUIRER from 1993 to 1996.

"At the end of that I found myself covering the courts," where she said incest cases were the fallback stories on a slow news day.

Desensitize

She realized the height of her desensitization when another reporter asked her if she had any news that day.

"*Wala eh, incest lang* (No stories. Just incest)," she answered.

Before the words were out of her mouth, Vizcarra felt terrible.

"I felt so bad after saying that. I was worried I won't be able to write for kids anymore."

She knew that she wanted to devote her writing to "something more nurturing."

Junior INQUIRER was just the ticket. She was promised a free hand and the prospect of a new project excited and appealed to her.

In her first issue on July 6, 1996, there were new sections in the paper: Kids & Adults (when they were kids), Iggy Ipis book reviews, the literary section For or By Kids, Out There, and Straight from JI readers.

Guyito, that familiar young carabao on the left ear of the masthead, was also born, thanks to Jess Abrera (the main paper's carabao on the other hand is named—what else?—Kalabaw).

The challenge

Vizcarra remembered the challenging beginning: "There were just Tessa (Salazar, JI's first editorial assistant) and I at that time. Our first three or four months, the work schedule wasn't smooth yet. We stayed in the office overnight two times a week!"

As the workflow was ironed out, things got better. But it was still a lot of hard work.

"Thinking of a children's magazine as a beat was a challenge for the paper and our first JI staff writer, Christine Rivero. The schools don't have a press office," she said.

"It was establishing a very new beat without assistance from colleagues."

Big dreams

Establish it they did. But Vizcarra still has big dreams for the Junior INQUIRER.

"What I hope will happen is for other papers to follow," she says. "Of course, that will mean competition, but that's good. We've tried to keep JI alive; it's because I want other papers to see it's worth doing. I want it to have an effect on similar outfits."

As a parting word, Vizcarra congratulated the JI readers. "It's their paper," she said.

The awarding rites will be held at the Via Mare Penthouse, Philippine Stock Exchange Center in Pasig City.

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Pimentel wants more witnesses called to telecoms probe

By Cynthia D. Balana

SENATE Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel yesterday urged the Senate blue ribbon committee to summon all witnesses before terminating its investigation on the telecommunications scandal.

Pimentel said the committee should first hear the testimony of Ito Los Baños, a supposed associate of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo who implicated him in an alleged attempt to take over the majority ownership of the Philippine Communications Clearinghouse Inc. (PCCI), a firm owned by businessman Pacifico Marcelo.

Marcelo was the applicant in the two telecommunications franchise which were rejected by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Sen. Joker Arroyo earlier said the committee was inclined to clear the First Gentleman of the charge that he accepted a P40 million bribe in exchange for the recall of the presidential veto on his franchise bills.

This is because Marcelo himself admitted that no bribery ever took place. He, however, implicated the President allegedly demanded 51 percent shares of PCCI.

Pimentel, however, did not object to Senator Arroyo's inclination to clear the First Gentleman on the basis of Marcelo's own testimony.

"It's only proper that the First Gentleman must be cleared," Pimentel said.

"The statement of the principal complainant (Marcelo) was very clear that Mike Arroyo was not in anyway involved in the alleged bribery attempt," he added.

Pimentel also noted that Los Baños had not appeared in previous committee hearings to which he was invited by claiming he was either sick or had previous engagements.

"I think the committee should subpoena him," Pimentel said.

The senator also pointed out that the committee has yet to summon former presidential appointments secretary Marita Jimenez, who was supposed to have arranged Marcelo's meeting with the President in Malacañang.

He said the minority in the Senate has a standing request to summon certain business associates of Marcelo like Leo San Miguel, Leon Ledesma and Juliet Marcelino.

Pimentel said San Miguel, Ledesma and Marcelino should be asked by the committee on the allegation that the Palace tried to pressure them into testifying that Marcelo merely fabricated his charges against the President.

Tiglao defends Gloria on HK wage cut

By D.Pazzibugan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is "doing everything" to spare Filipino workers in Hong Kong from a 21.6 percent minimum wage cut imposed by the government on foreign workers, her spokesperson said yesterday.

Rigoberto Tiglao said the Philippine government can only "request" the Hong Kong government to reconsider its decision.

"The President is doing everything to request the Hong Kong government not to push through with the wage cut... But we can't demand," he said.

He said other countries such as the US have also complained against the "high minimum wages" in the country, but they do not demand that the government reduce them.

Ms Macapagal drew flak from Hong Kong-based Filipino workers' groups after she supported the call for a pay cut lower than 21.6 percent.

In her press conference on Friday, Ms Macapagal welcomed a proposal from some of the Hong Kong-based Filipino workers for a 5 to 10 percent wage cut instead.

"That's a very, very good input," she had said, calling the attention of the labor and foreign affairs departments who are lobbying against the wage cut.

Tiglao said the criticisms hurled at the President were "unfair."

"It's quite unfair to the President that her statement was twisted," he said.

He challenged the workers themselves, who are mostly employed as domestic helpers, to help lobby against the wage cut by asking their employers to lobby on their behalf.

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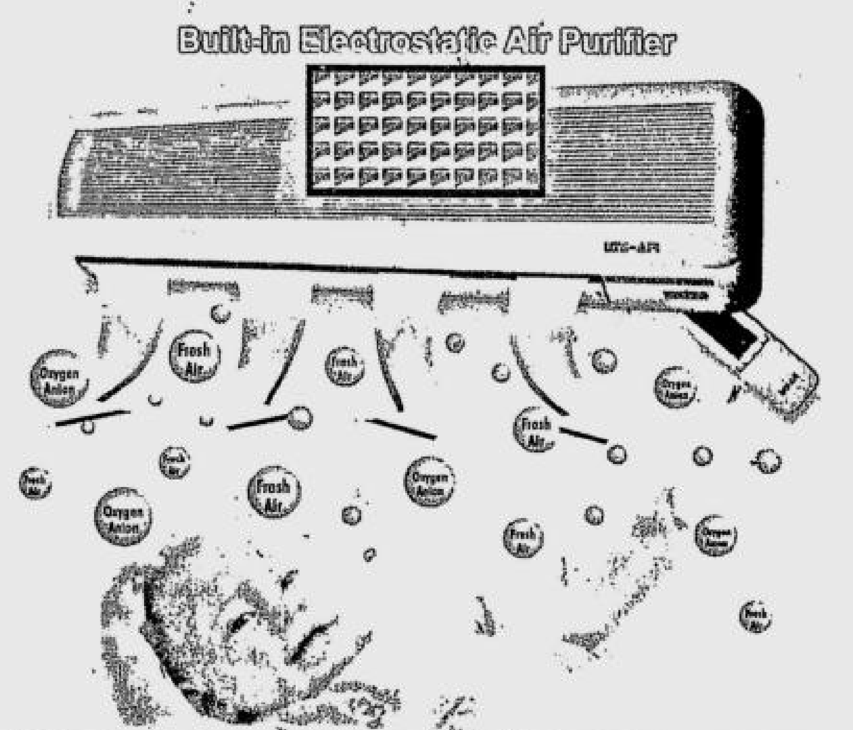

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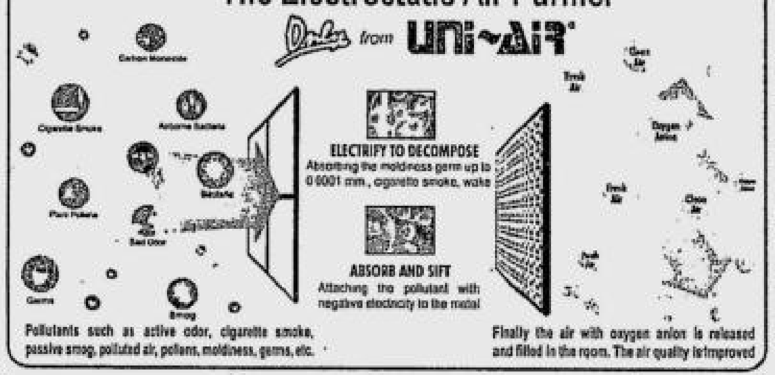

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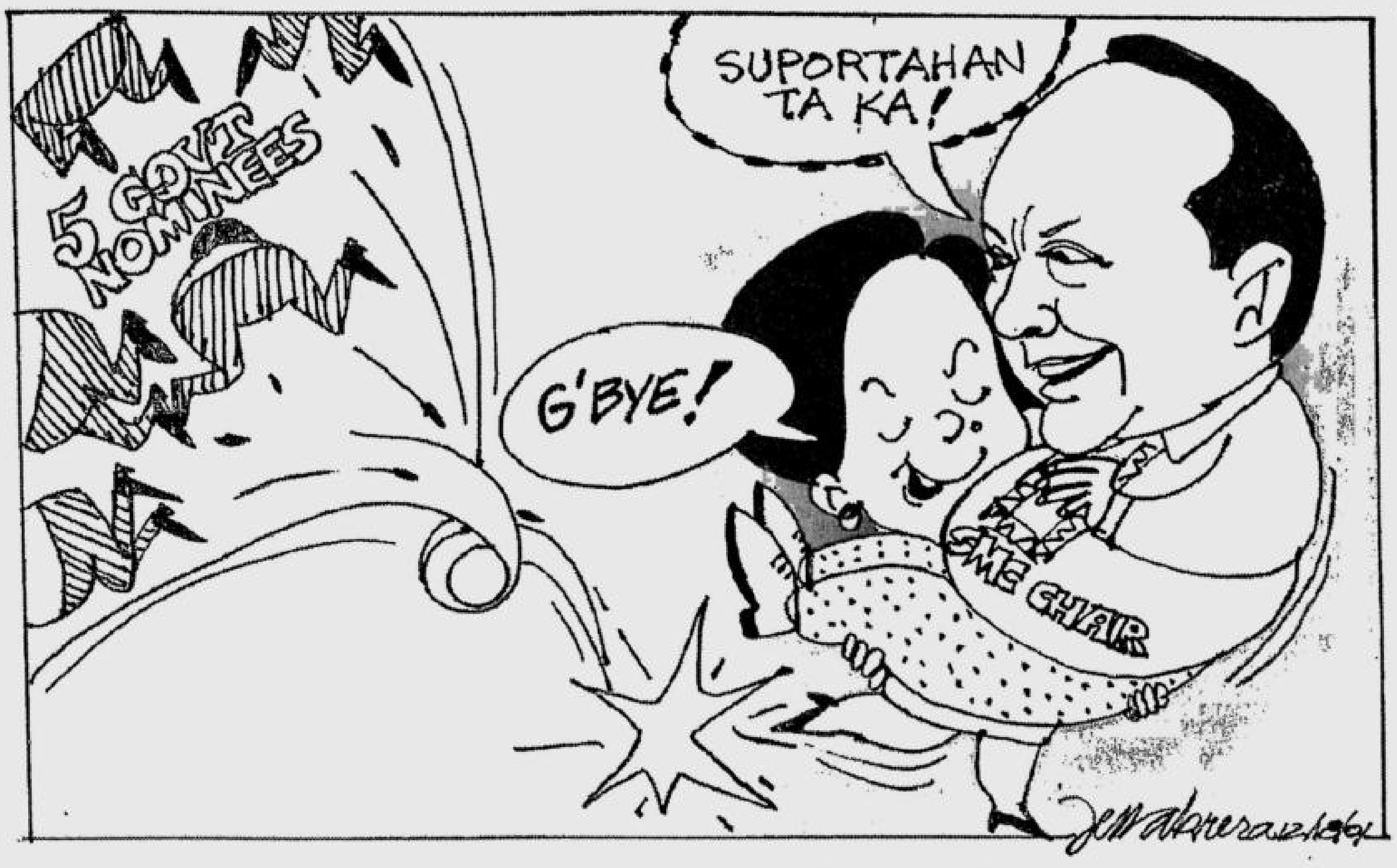


EDITORIALS

Search for sanctuary

THE SANDIGANBAYAN has correctly ruled that deposed President Joseph Estrada and his son Jinggoy may not be allowed to enjoy a furlough during the Christmas holidays. Had the court allowed them to go home for the holidays, the Philippine criminal justice system would have been the laughingstock of the world.

But it appears that the Estradas, father and son, won't stop at anything to get out of confinement at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center. The former president now wants to be allowed to go the United States for an operation on his knee. The son says he is suffering from a heart condition and he has to be transferred to another hospital. Yesterday he asked the Supreme Court to allow him to post bail.

We are glad the deposed president has undergone a successful operation for a cataract. The operation at the Asian Eye Institute should convince him that we have world-class Filipino doctors and state-of-the-art medical equipment and facilities in our country, and that he need not go abroad for treatment of his knee.

Estrada wants to go to the United States for a knee replacement operation. But the operation can be done here by skilled doctors and with the latest medical facilities. Dr. Joseph M. Carabeo of the Code Red for Good Governance says the National Orthopedic Hospital conducts diagnostic arthroscopy, a minor surgical procedure to examine the knee joint, and even knee replacement. Private hospitals like the St. Luke's Medical Center, Makati Medical Center and Capitol Medical Center are other options. An orthopedic surgeon based in the United States has set up the Philippine Orthopedic Institute which has its own manufacturing plant for knee and joint prostheses in Laguna.

If Estrada does not trust Filipino doctors, he can always ask his American surgeon to come over to perform the operation. We are afraid (and we risk making an atrocious pun) his request to go to the United States for knee surgery has practically no leg to stand on. His request for permission to seek such treatment abroad appears to be, as Dr. Carabeo has said, "a desperate search for sanctuary rather than a cure for his illness."

Jinggoy has gotten into the act, and recently was shown on a wheelchair on television, trying to justify his request to be transferred to another hospital from the VMMC. Now he says his heart condition is worsening and that it could improve if he were confined in another hospital. What's wrong with the VMMC, anyway?

Jinggoy reminds us of Moliere's "Imaginary Invalid," a hypochondriac who wants to be sick. Some people can—and do—will themselves to be sick. Is it possible that he's putting on an act so he can enjoy greater liberty at another venue than what he is enjoying at VMMC?

Think about the hundreds of detainees who are facing charges for capital crimes who are detained in crowded, dirty, foul-smelling, pest-infested, hot and humid jails. Then picture the Estradas in the luxury of an air-conditioned, fully furnished hospital suite at the VMCC. Is this special treatment not enough for them?

New worlds

IN THE MEXICAN movie "Divine," which was shown at the Cinemanila International Film Festival, Papa Basilio, an ardent film buff, says, "Movies are like God; they create worlds."

In the just concluded film festival, movies did create new worlds which film buffs inhabited and experienced for a brief 10 days. It is well that the festival has been extended for eight days to give those who failed to watch some of the movies the opportunity to view the best of the lot.

Aside from "Divine," which is loosely based on an actual event in the 1970s involving a crazy religious cult anticipating the end of the world, we would recommend some others for their viewing: "Jan Dara," based on the most controversial—and erotic—novel in Thai literature; "The King is Dancing," a brilliant recreation of the court of Louis XIV; "Chunnhyang," the Korean version of "Romeo and Juliet"; "Under the Sand," an offbeat study of a personal loss; "The Isle," a shocking tale which some people may find too gory; and "Farinelli," which tells a segment of the life story of one of the greatest singers of the 18th century.

At the festival, a standing-room-only audience (many sat in the aisles) went the five whole hours during the premiere of "Batang West Side," Lav Diaz's work which is touted as "a film about the Filipino soul." We hope the two segments can be shown again in commercial theaters.

All in all, the Cinemanila International Film Festival, with its varied offering, was quite an experience for local film buffs. We hope it will continue to be held in Makati, which is much more accessible than Mandaluyong, in the years to come.

How farmers were cheated out of coco levy

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

SEE, it wasn't so hard to understand that the coco levy is a public fund, not a private one, was it? After all, it is a simple case. The levy was imposed and collected by the government for public purposes to benefit coconut farmers. It is clear that it is a public fund. The wonder is why it took many years for the Supreme Court to declare it as such. The clarity and simplicity of it is clear to laymen; it is only lawyers who make it confusing.

In the beginning, there was the Moisture Meter Law which authorized the Philippine Coconut Authority (Philcoa) to measure the moisture content of copra being sold and impose a fee depending on the moisture content. The purpose was to encourage farmers to dry their copra well so that only good quality copra was exported.

Then came RA 6260 in 1971 imposing the Cocofund Levy, instituting a Coconut Investment Fund and creating a Coconut Investment Company. A levy of 55 centavos per 100 kilos of copra on first sale was automatically deducted from farmgate prices. The levy was for a period of 10 years.

During martial rule, President Marcos issued a series of presidential decrees whose intent and letter were clearly for public purposes. But in the details, the lawyers crafted the decrees to manipulate the funds and deceive the millions of coconut farmers into becoming a source of fortune for a privileged few.

In 1973, Marcos issued PD 278 creating the Coconut Consumers Stabilization Fund (CCSP) and increased the coco levy to P15 per 100 kilos of copra. The announced purpose was to subsidize the sale of cooking oil and laundry bar soap. The millers deducted the levy from their buying price and remitted it to Philcoa. Being public funds, the fund was audited by the Commission on Audit.

In April 1974, PD 414 was issued extending the levy indefinitely and authorizing Philcoa to increase or decrease the levy as it sees fit. It expanded the use of the coco levy fund to include "investment" and "development."

Under PD 755 and in the name of "investment," Eduardo Cojuangco, as director of the Philcoa board, negotiated the purchase of First United Bank from his relative, Jose Cojuangco. Bought with coco levy funds, that bank became the United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB), mandated as the depository bank of coco levy fund. The bank did not pay any interest to the fund. Cojuangco became UCPB president and also administrator of the coco levy fund.

Also using coco levy funds, coconut oil mills and trading companies were bought to organize a coconut monopoly called United Coconut Oil Mills (Unicom) with Cojuangco as president.

Further using coco levy funds, 47 percent of the total shares of San Miguel Corp. were bought, instantly making Cojuangco chair of SMC.

In the name of "development," a contract was executed between Cojuangco as UCPB president and administrator of the coco levy fund, and himself, as owner of the Agriculture Investment Inc. (AII)—a small company then capitalized with only P100,000—for the delivery of 100 million hybrid coconut seedlings to Philcoa/UCPB for five years. Contract price: P980 million to be taken from the coco levy fund.

The contract stipulated that upon signing, P500 million shall be advanced to AII, interest free, and that—here is the clincher—in the event that UCPB stopped buying during the five-year period, UCPB had to pay the entire contracted amount as if everything was delivered. Sure enough, after three years and with barely 16 million seedlings delivered, UCPB declared that it could no longer continue buying and, as the contract stipulated, UCPB had to pay the entire contracted amount. Remember, the owner of AII was Cojuangco and the president of UCPB was also Cojuangco. Records show that over P1.2 billion of coco levy funds were sunk into the Bugsuk Seed Garden of Cojuangco.

In 1976 came the decree that messed up the whole coco levy fund. Marcos issued PD 961 amending prior decrees and declaring the coco levy as a "private fund belonging to the coconut farmers in their private capacity." This was to prevent the COA from auditing the coco levy fund. At the same time, it made the coconut farmers believe that the continuing collection of the levy was for their private benefit.

In 1980 came the final blow. Marcos issued PD 1699 declaring the coco levy as a "tax burden" and transferred the burden from the farmers to the millers and retaining the private nature of the levy fund. But the millers, just the same, deducted the levy from their buying price. The levy was at that time already about 40 percent of the price of copra. The millers sent the collected fund to Philcoa no longer as a "remittance" but as "payment."

PD 1699 effectively removed ownership of coco levy funds from the farmers, the government and also the millers. With the funds no longer owned by anybody, it became easy to put them in the name of Marcos cronies and dummies, as the COA discovered after the Edsa Revolution of 1986.

In all these, Cojuangco had full control of the funds. As sole end-user, he remitted the levy to the Philcoa where he was a director. Philcoa then deposited the money in UCPB where Cojuangco was the president. The funds were then used for 'investment" and "development" in Unicom, SMC, Bugsuk Seed Garden, UCPB's commercial banking and other smaller business ventures where Cojuangco was either chair or president. Under his control and aided by interlocking directorates and with Marcos on top, public funds became private funds.

With the coconut monopoly well entrenched, Marcos issued in 1982 EO 828 lifting the collection of the levy (in the end, the coco levy was already P100 per 100 kilos of copra) and banning the export of coconut products except through Unicom which was also controlled by Cojuangco. Despite the abolition of the levy, farm prices of copra did not go up because Unicom, as the sole buyer, bought at the same or lower price as if the levy was still there, thus cheating the coconut farmers.

(Facts and figures from the Coconut Industry Reform (COIR) Movement Inc.) ***To be continued***

Uplifting

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

FRANKLY, I do not know where some people get this idea that "Hubog" makes fun of autistics. That is the latest movie of Joel Lamangan, which seems to be raising the hackles anew of the "moral terrorists," as ex-MTRCB chief Nick Tiongson once called them.

To begin with, the character played by Alessandra de Rossi is not autistic, she is retarded. She has the mind of a 5-year old, as someone explicitly says in the movie. But whatever her mental condition, she is not treated disparagingly, or exploitatively, by the movie. On the contrary, she is treated very sympathetically there.

Which in any case still misses the point. "Hubog" is not about that at all. It is about frustration, desperation and rage—the elements that define the lives of the poor, the elements that make events like "Edsa III" possible. Which is in fact the setting of "Hubog," the period between Edsa II and "Edsa III." The movie takes an unflinching look at the desperate and tangled lives of a group of people in a monstrously impoverished community in Metro Manila, which is pretty much what most communities are in this country. It offers a microcosm of historical events in personal stories, of well-known earthshaking events in the life of the nation in the lives of its small and forgotten people. "Hubog" begins with repressed fury and ends with seething explosion. It is the story of a few characters, it is the story of the nation.

But "Hubog" is above all a movie, not a political tract. It tells a gripping tale, and tells it well. Lamangan is a raconteur in the mold of Lino Brocka, this movie in particular treading resolutely in Brocka's footsteps, with its rawness, realism and boundless sympathy for the wretched of the earth.

"Hubog" tells the story of two sisters who are orphaned by the death of their mother. Alessandra is a retarded adolescent whom her sister, Assunta de Rossi, refuses to hand over to the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Barely able to keep her own body and soul together, Assunta resolves nevertheless to take care of her sister. Which proves near-impossible. She loses her job as a sales clerk; the competition is fierce, and as her boss tells her not unsympathetically, it's just a choice between people with different tragedies. Her boyfriend, who drives a taxi part-time and does petty crimes full-time, goes to jail for a botched robbery and disappears, presumably the victim of a "salvaging."

Bereft of job and succor, she becomes the mistress of a bodyguard, a man named Uno, who discards an old partner first. Assunta and sister find a roof over their heads but not without paying a huge "rent." Assunta turns *labandera* by day and sex slave at night. Her partner is not uncaring (he feels an obligation to provide) but he demands as well from Assunta an obligation to be grateful, and show it. Alessandra, who is left pretty much to her devices, is victimized by the toughies in the neighborhood. They get their way with her in exchange for hamburgers. The movie by no means makes trivializes or exploits this point. The victimization is patent.

Meanwhile, the mood of the community turns extremely ugly, the residents stoked to fury by pro-Erap characters who dangle cash in exchange for their bodies in rallies. The personal and political intersect: Assunta's boyfriend reappears, having survived the "salvage" attempt, and rekindles her affection for him. It paves the way for a murderous confrontation between him and Uno, which takes place at the same time as the May 1 riots in Mendiola.

I'll leave it at that, lest I spoil everything for the viewer. I must say however that I was impressed by the De Rossi sisters in this movie. Alessandra I knew to be a good actor, having seen her in "Asucena": I've always thought this girl would go places. But the new revelation was Assunta, who has lodged in the public consciousness as a bold star. If this movie proves anything, it is that her boldness goes beyond showing skin. It goes to baring soul. This girl can act, just as well as her younger sister. Which should be a good reminder once again never to judge a book by its cover—or a person by her non-cover.

The cinematography is fantastic.

I was impressed as well by the fullness of the characters. These are not characters that are too easy to like or hate, and for that we have to thank Roi Iglesias, who wrote the script. Lamangan is getting better all the time, though I thought the last 15 minutes of the movie were much too high in decibel levels. I have no problem with loud or excessive violence in movies—I figure we would do better to curb too much violence in real life than in the movies—but I have a problem with its effectiveness. I've always thought excess subtracted rather than added. Too much violence does not shock, it numbs—or puts off. But that is a minor quibble, and an aesthetic, not moral, one. These days, one has to make that distinction very clear.

But quite apart from this, I would like to congratulate Lamangan for boldness of an even more epic kind. Last year, he also defied conventional wisdom by coming out with "Death Row" for the Metro Manila Film Festival, a movie most people predicted would fail to win awards and bring audiences into theaters because it went against the grain of the Christmas spirit. I don't know about the awards and audiences, but I do know "Death Row" did not fail to live up to the Christmas spirit. As does "Hubog."

The Christmas spirit is about uplifting messages, true, but uplifting messages do not always come from Reader's-Digest-type stories. The most uplifting story I know is that of an infant born in the most abject surroundings, in a shed used by animals, because no respectable hotel manager in town would allow his parents to set foot in a hotel lobby. And the greatest demonstration of wisdom I know is three powerful dignitaries having the humility to see the magic of that birth.

Maybe Lamangan should do a movie about that too.

Davide: 'Leave politics to the politicians'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

CHIEF Justice Hilario Davide was among the 10 magistrates who voted to declare the coco levy funds public in character, thus ending the protracted debate on this controversy. Judging from all the euphoria in the media, it is a very popular decision as the perception is that the impoverished coconut farmers finally have a glimmer of hope that they could benefit from the levy imposed on their produce for nearly 10 years (1973-82). Davide's court is looking good in the eyes of the people, which has resurrected talk among some groups about fielding the Chief Justice for president in 2004. But Davide, whom a survey once labeled as the "most trusted Filipino," is quick to dampen all enthusiasm in this regard.

At the recent fun run-golf recently held by the Philippine Judges' Association at the Riviera Golf & Country Club in Silang, Cavite, on the occasion of the Chief Justice's third anniversary in his post, Davide said there was no basis for such talk. Davide stressed that he plans to completely retire from the public eye on Dec. 20, 2005, when he shall have reached the compulsory retirement age for SC justices. "I will leave politics to the politicians," he said, even as he reiterated his favorite message that "a good judiciary is God's instrument."

* * *

Speaking of the SC, it is curious to note that the four justices who voted to declare the Anti-Plunder Law unconstitutional, and therefore favoring deposed President Estrada, were the same ones who again voted against declaring the coconut levy funds public in character. Had their side won, it would have favored the group of Eduardo Cojuangco. These justices were Bernardo Pardo, Santiago Kapunan, Consuelo Ynares-Santiago and Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez. Voting with the four minority justices was Justice Jose Melo, making it a 10-5 vote.

* * *

The Muslim and Christian worlds recently held religious ceremonies in the same week. Muslims brought the holy month of Ramadan, a period of fasting and prayer, to a close on Eid'l Fitr, while the Catholics began their dawn masses, the *Misa de Gallo* or *Simbang Gabi*, Sunday morning. Among those who led in the observance of Eid'l Fitr was Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona. He invited all the ambassadors of the Muslim countries that have diplomatic relations with the Philippines last Thursday afternoon to a closing ritual to honor Ramadan at the Department of Foreign Affairs. The affair started with the closing prayers for the assembly, and then the DFA officials and the Muslim ambassadors broke the fast after sundown with a meal that also featured a lot of camaraderie. The diplomats appreciated the government's effort to establish closer ties with the Muslim world. It was the first time such an event was held at the DFA.

* * *

Every Sunday evening at 9:15, I co-host with Cecile Guidote-Alvarez a segment of her Radyo Balintataw over dzRH where we focus on efforts to alleviate poverty in the country. Last Sunday we invited Vice President Guingona (again this coming Sunday at 9:15 p.m.) to discuss various concerns of importance to our overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). We realized that many OFWs have come home for the holidays, and they and their families would be interested in the various programs the DFA has launched for them as part of "OFW empowerment."

One is the Overseas Filipino Investor (OFI) bonds in $100 denomination to be launched early next year in cooperation with the Department of Finance. Guingona explained that these government-guaranteed bonds, a form of savings for the OFWs, will earn them interest and enable them to avail of various benefits from the government, including automatic participation in a weekly lottery with $10,000 as prize. Guingona said the DFA is also studying the matter of issuing "retirement bonds" as this seems to be a constant clamor of our OFWs. Another program the DFA is pushing is the training of OFWs in higher skills through distance learning in conjunction with the International Labor Organization so that they could earn higher wages abroad and become more competitive in the global age.

* * *

But perhaps the most interesting issues right now for OFWs are absentee voting and the related subject of dual citizenship. Guingona said these are the hottest issues being discussed by Pinoys abroad. Upon the prodding of Star columnist Chit Pedrosa who joined us on the program, he stressed that the issue of dual citizenship is implied in our Constitution. But he conceded that the legislature could make this clearer for the people who are quite confused about it. He promised to have our embassies and consulates abroad undertake a more effective information campaign about the twin issues of citizenship and absentee voting.

With regard to absentee voting, Guingona stressed that he would prefer that the OFWs be allowed to vote first for their party-list representatives in Congress, before they are allowed to vote for the national candidates. For instance, he said, OFWs in Asian countries could have one representative, those based in Europe another, etc. This would be like a dress rehearsal for the big elections, he said.

* * *

I told Guingona that perhaps we could learn from the Mexican experience in dual citizenship and absentee voting. Having recently visited Mexico, my husband and I, along with the Pedrosas, were invited by Mexican Ambassador Enrique Hubbard to a delightful lunch at the Casino Español, together with his second-in-command, Carlos Torres. Among the things we talked about were these issues. Hubbard, who is considered an authority on immigration issues in Mexico (he wrote a book on the subject), explained that his country allows dual nationality for the Mexicans, mainly because there are an estimated 10 to 20 million Mexicans now living in the United States, who periodically cross the border to visit their native land and then go back to work in the United States. (I note that the Mexicans split hairs between "nationality" and "citizenship" and it is in the latter concept where the right to vote comes in.) Hubbard pointed out that the matter of exercising the right to vote for candidates in Mexico is being studied at the moment, as there are many problems. For instance, Mexico maintains one embassy in Washington, D.C. and more than 50 consulates across the United States, but with its huge ethnic population in that country, those facilities may not suffice.

The same is probably true for the Philippines. With the big Filipino population in the United States, the handful of Philippine consulates would be hard put to handle the mechanics of voting for Filipino national candidates.

Traditions

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

I ONCE asked some friends of mine in Singapore how the citizens of their tiny city-state managed to get along despite the fact that they came from distinct and diverse ethnic roots. Though today it seems more like a bland cosmopolitan business district than a city with history, Singapore actually began as a port that drew traders from all over the world and was populated by descendants of three major ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese (or Straits Chinese) and Indian. The coming together of these peoples in a "melting pot" was not without the sparks of racial conflict. As late as the 1960s, in fact, race riots still erupted in the streets of Singapore, usually arising from the resentment of the Malay masses against the political and economic dominance of the Chinese.

But today, said my friends, the racial boundaries have not been so much erased as blurred. "We're not forced into a single mold," a friend told me. "In fact, our diversity is celebrated. We grew up observing a 'Malay Day,' a 'Chinese Day' and an 'Indian Day.'" Religious and folk festivals, in all their variety, color and touches of the bizarre, are observed by everyone, with anyone wanting to take part welcomed, regardless of ethnicity.

I recalled this conversation as we observed yesterday Eid'l Fitr or Hari-Raya Puasa, the end of the Muslim season of Ramadan. "What are we celebrating today?" my teenage daughter wanted to know, as perhaps many other Filipino children asked their parents. I took it as a chance to explain Ramadan and why it was so significant to Muslims, a wonderful opportunity to teach our children about diversity and tolerance and the need to respect other cultures and faiths.

In fact, it is such an excellent idea you'd wonder why no one thought of declaring a Muslim official holiday before. My only regret is that while we Christians enjoyed a "day off" to join our Muslim brethren in observance of Eid'l Fitr, we were given little opportunity to join in the festivities, even if only by way of TV. Perhaps next year, the Muslim community can launch a program to host Christian families during the feast, and TV shows can do more in-depth coverage of this new holiday in the national calendar.

* * *

SPEAKING of traditions, "The Nutcracker," the ballet about a young girl's dream of a dashing Nutcracker Prince and a visit to the land of the Sugarplum Fairy, has itself become a Christmas tradition. In Manila, the tradition has been carried on by Ballet Manila, which just wound up its two-week-end run in its new home, the Star Theater at the grounds of Star City.

We braved the El Shaddai crowds and traffic Saturday evening and found to our amazement a swirling mass of theatergoers milling about the entrance. They looked nothing like the typical ballet crowd, a lot of them being teenagers in "*porma*" wear and entire families complete with a *lola* or two. A few foreigners in more-or-less formal attire (business suits and pearls with little black dresses) stood out from the casual crowd. As for myself, I was running a fever that night and so sneaked in a blanket that I draped over me as soon as the lights dimmed.

Still, watching "The Nutcracker" amid an eager and boisterous audience gave the experience a whole new edge. So who cared if they applauded in the wrong places? The children, as all children do, laughed with delight at the sight of the huge rats frolicking in the living room. Everyone gasped as the curtains opened, to reveal snow falling as viewed from tall windows limned by a giant Christmas tree. And the cheers and bravos were heartfelt and spontaneous as Lisa Macuja and Osias Barroso completed their amazing pas de deux.

I must admit I was a little skeptical about the idea of building a home for a ballet company in the middle of a carnival site. But Saturday's experience shows just how hungry and appreciative the mass audience is for quality entertainment. And what a wonderful way to make art accessible to the ordinary person, though "The Nutcracker" is of course one of the most accessible and child-friendly ballets. Would the "Star City" crowd be ready for, say, "Swan Lake?" I'm betting they are, and look forward to sharing the theater with them then.

* * *

ALSO a popular offering at the Cultural Center, judging from the size of the audience, was "Peter Pan," Ballet Philippines' Yuletide offering that was as much a treat for adults as for the children.

With choreography by Edna Vida and using the music and libretto of the popular American musicale, "Peter Pan" has all the requisite attractions, especially the "flying" effects that sent Peter Pan, Wendy, Peter and Michael soaring through the air. The dancing lagged at some moments (I thought the "tango" number of Captain Hook and his pirates dragged far longer than it should), but for the most part, the ballet made the essential connection with its largely young audience.

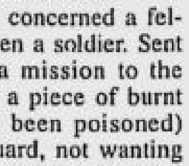
Children in the audience were visibly and audibly thrilled and delighted especially when the crocodile chased Captain Hook off the stage and hunted for him among the audience. The shrieks and laughter of children was enough to bring on the Christmas spirit to even the most jaded dispositions.

Since there were alternate casts, I can't cite individual performers here. But I must say the young boy who portrayed Michael, one of three boys taking part in a special dance program for street children, was a delightful surprise. He did his turns with confidence and elan, and communicated his energy all the way across the huge theater. May he dance his way through many more Christmases!

Herbal remedies

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper



YOU would think that since the Philippines was known among certain circles of scientists for its biodiversity that government would invest in research to study medicinal properties of its plants, especially those in use by the indigenous communities, rather than have foreign scientists do it for multinationals. Who would have thought, for instance, that *ampalaya* has a component that can lower blood pressure, or that the Aetas have an herb that prevented conception? Since forests are perceived as valuable only because of the lumber it can produce, we cannot expect that people, unaware of the potential being destroyed, will bother to protect whatever remains of the rain forests.

Reading accounts of our wonderful flora, you can only shake your head at what might have been. Fr. Francisco Colin, a Jesuit provincial in the 17th century, tells us in his "Labor Evangelico" (Vol I) that there were many venomous herbs, plants, flowers, roots and even trees that poisoned even the air that passed over them. But luckily there were as well remedies against these poisons, like the roots of some trees and the fruits and leaves of some ivy that entwine themselves in trees. These were usually green or yellow in color and very bitter to the taste.

The most famous and most frequently used by the Jesuits in the Isla de Pintados was the *manungal (Samader indica, Palo Santo)*. They used them as powders, or scrapings were dissolved in warm water or coconut oil with marvelous results against malignant fevers.

In 1628 an epidemic ran through the streets of Manila that claimed lives in a few hours, especially among those with weak stomachs or of poor resistance. The Jesuits suggested the use of the oil of *manungal*, and it was said that no one died who had drunk it in time. From then on, it was available in the gatehouse of the college where the poor could ask for it.

Fray Colin writes of another plant whose miraculous curative properties he had occasion to experience. While in Mindoro, he tripped on a piece of wood that pierced the shinbone of his left foot. The wound was such that he was unable to even stand and celebrate Mass. A Chinese came by and, after examining the wound, asked for the leaves of a certain herb that was known locally as *alipayon*. He cut enough to cover the wound, wet it in water and pasted it on. He ordered that it be changed two or three times a day and explained that as long as there was blood and pus, the ulcer would keep growing but with the use of the poultice the wound would eventually close and heal. And so it went until finally there was nothing left but the scar.

Another incident he related concerned a fellow religious who had once been a soldier. Sent by the governor general on a mission to the Igorots in the Ilocos in 1624, a piece of burnt stalk (later believed to have been poisoned) pierced his foot. As the vanguard, not wanting to alarm his companions who were following him, he tried to hide his wound until the trail of blood gave him away. His companions did what they could to remove the thorn but were unsuccessful. There were no other medicinal powders save what they had in their flasks that they applied with a piece of linen tied to his foot. They continued on their march, passing through rivers and swamps. When they finally arrived on friendly territory, the foot was so inflamed no one dared touch it.

The priest was carried to Pangasinan where the government scribe gave him a mashed root warmed with boiling coconut oil that was applied to the wound where the shaft had entered. Within four hours, a blister formed and the thorn begun to come out like a growing asparagus. After 24 hours, a third of it had emerged and correspondingly the pain and inflammation abated. In 40 hours the shaft fell off, leaving the wound dry and healed. Luckily the former soldier was soon able to walk despite the shaft having been embedded in his foot for 16 days. The remedy came from a root that was similar to ginger with the color of *achuete* that the locals called *dilao*, the fruit of which was like saffron.

Amuyon, Fray Colin informs us, was a very big tree with fruits like hazelnuts, spicy and effective like pepper in curing stomachaches and chills.

Pandacaque, on the other hand, caused animals to give birth. He was reliably informed, Fray Colin says, that in difficult cases, women used it to expel placenta after giving birth. The cures of the little tree were many and it ranked high in the catalogue of medicinal plants among the herbalists of the period.

In a certain place in Bohol was a tree called *camandag* that was so poisonous it killed even the sardines that ate the leaves floating in the sea and in turn killed those who ate the fish. The Boholanos used the liquid it sweated for their arrow tips to cause mortal wounds. The tree itself and its shadow were so malignant that no other tree or plant grew beside it. Transplanted it dried up everything with the exception of a little tree that was its opposite. Just having a leaf of this other tree in the mouth was enough to thwart the poison. Fray Colin wonders whether this wasn't the same as the curare of the Americas.

Another cure against poisons was the *macabuhay* (meaning, that which gives life). It was as thick as a finger and belonged to the ivy family and grew entwined around a tree. The stem was full of eyes or holes from which thick threads grew that the natives harvested and wove into bracelets for use as antidote against poisons.

Christmas in May

YOUNGBLOOD

K.M.

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

LIKE any child, I used to believe in the miracles of Christmas. For instance, I believed that wishes were actually granted by the man in red named Santa and that he really observed children to find out if they had been bad or good. I always asked Santa for toys and dresses and chocolates. And I never missed to secretly wish for my father to be home on Christmas even if only at midnight of Dec. 24. But 20 Christmases in my life came and went but I never got the gift I had been fervently asking for.

Now that I have grown up, I have to leave behind the fairy tales, toys, childish games and my innocence. I have out-grown things which children do, but my childhood dream remains a fantasy. Still it was never really lost. It just kept sitting silently in one corner of my mind.

One of the most painful experiences of my childhood was when my classmates and playmates mocked me for being fatherless. I can still remember how it felt to go home crying because I couldn't stand the teasing of my classmates and, oh, the look of pain and pity in my mother's eyes.

One afternoon, I came home a mess. Some of the buttons of my uniform were missing. I told my mother that I had gotten into a fight with a classmate because she teased me about my father's absence and compared it with her own father's sweet presence in their home. Obviously I was envious of her, but being a child, I didn't look at it that way. That time I prayed hard to Santa even if it wasn't Christmas, to Jesus and all the Saints to let my father come and rescue her little girl. I even imagined him coming in Superman's attire.

The best Christmas gift I ever had arrived too early or too late, depending on how you look at it. It came to me one day in May when I was nine.

One lazy summer afternoon my mother told me she had listed my name among the candidates in a competition among kids that was intended to raise funds for the community. She had always liked applying make-up on my face and dressing me up in gowns and pretty dresses. Her excitement rose as the day of the contest neared.

The problem came a few days before the contest when she learned that the fathers would be crowning the candidates. When she told me this, I sank into the chair in frustration knowing that I did not have one. My classmate with whom I had a fight earlier was our neighbor and I knew she would love to see me turn green with envy as the other candidates' fathers went up the stage on coronation night.

My interest in the event vanished, and even when my uncle volunteered to do the job, I still felt sad for I didn't think that there's anyone who could ever take the place of a real father.

But miracles do happen. I was speechless when two days before the big event, my mother introduced me to a tall man whom I have never seen before but who seemed to exude a strange warmth toward me. My instinct instantly told me he was someone important. The questions that flashed through my mind were answered when my mother finally announced that he was my father.

My father? Her words echoed in my head. For some moments, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how I was supposed to act in the situation. Shall I embrace him? Or give him a smile, perhaps?

I just stared at him for a long time, studied him, stupefied by the fact that I was actually facing the man I had been dreaming of. His big arms would surely protect me from my enemies, I thought. I smiled as I imagined him running after those petrified kids.

I didn't tell my friends that my father would actually be there on the big night. It was for me a special secret. I wanted to surprise them. My enemy would surely wilt in bewilderment and dismay, I thought.

On the coronation night, I was very nervous and excited, especially as the moment for me to take center stage came. I must have looked very pretty in my peach gown with flowers scattered on the hem and on the chest. You can just imagine the happiness and pride I was feeling as my parents, together after a very long time, pinned a sash on me. I was overjoyed. It was a feeling that was like no other.

The highlight of the night was when the band played a piece and the fathers took the hands of their little princesses for a dance. I was floating in the clouds as we danced and little angels must have been clapping their tiny hands in approval.

That was the first time I ever felt perfectly secure. No one would dare to mock or hurt me, I thought, I had my father to protect me.

It was indeed a fairy tale, a dream come true, the Christmas of Christmases. I prayed that time would stand still and that only the sound of music and the beating of our hearts would continue.

That picture remains vivid in my mind, framed and tucked carefully in my memory box. But then, music has its own ending, and there is a time for waking up from dreams. And so, like the time when he appeared on our doorstep, I was again overcome by surprise and numbness when he left a few days later. Once again, my world became quiet—even quieter than before. It's always that way: the silence after a loud noise seems deeper and more haunting.

My father left with an indefinite promise to come back and the assurance that one day I would understand him.

Mother told me he left on a big ship. I thought he had been devoured by the waves. Sometimes I would picture him out there in cities far away, melting into the arms of another woman, surrounded by kids, enjoying an existence from which I had been completely shut out. Darkness fell upon my world.

Everything just went quiet after he left. I was engulfed by insecurity and sadness. I became an irritable, bratty child. I usually got into fights because I wanted to prove that even without my father, I could protect myself.

After he was gone, nothing could satisfy me anymore, nothing could make me really happy. Toys, dresses and material things would just make me forget my loss for a time but I never experienced the same kind of happiness I felt with my father. Excellence was not worth pursuing because there was just one pair of hands to clap for me and that was my mother's. My father's window was closed while my mother's door was wide open, but I still kept staring at the closed window, hoping it would open one day.

Now, 11 years later, I stand tall and proud for having been able to survive even without the nurturing of a father. No one can really say that I am fatherless because I was brought up by a mother who was as creative and caring as any married couple in the world. No one can really say that I am fatherless except if they peek into my wounded heart.

The last time I saw him was when I went to Manila last Christmas. I went to their place and blurted out all the feelings I had kept bottled up inside me. As I shouted sharp and angry words, tears kept rolling down my face. I hated him and I hated myself for feeling so bitter toward him.

Father. Such a sweet but strange word for me. The punishing lashes of his absence have taught me how to face the world with strength and wit. It's I who fixes electrical problems and lifts things that my mother can't. I do all the things a father or a brother is supposed to do. It's even I who decides on difficult problem. Maybe I ought to thank him for throwing me into a situation where I am forced to fend for myself and develop my potentials, but I don't think I can ever forgive him for not being there when I needed him most and for corrupting the times that could have been ours.

I have been forced to protect my mother and myself because if I don't, no one will. I have to be strong and learn how to fight. I have learned that you have to stand your ground because if you don't, others will sweep you away.

I have tried hard to make myself happy because I am not. I do things so that I would feel like I belong and I count. I seek thrills and adventure because ordinary things cannot fill this void inside me. I go to great lengths to fill that space my father has emptied. I try to find alternatives but no one and nothing can ever replace a father's embrace.

Time has passed, things have changed and I have grown up. Maybe I have grown strong, but there will always be that scared little child deep within me waiting to be hushed by her big daddy. There will always be that little princess in me, waiting for another Christmas in May.

K.M., 20, finished A.B. Political Science at the University of the Philippines and is now a law freshman.

Taking care of the elderly

THE AUTHOR of your Dec. 5 "Highblood" column talked about confronting "old" age. Being a septuagenarian, he encouraged people, particularly the elderly, to age gracefully by keeping fit and taking good care of their health by keeping active, by keeping up with what's going on in the world. He also mentioned as examples many others who blossomed and attained greatness past the age of 70. The author said, "Life begins at 70." But does it really?

I am not in any way criticizing the author of the article. Yes, I do agree that for some people, life begins at 70. But for others, maybe not.

I am referring to the older people who are neglected by their families, those who can be found in homes for the aged and in the streets, wandering and begging for alms, with scanty clothing to protect their fragile bodies from the heat of the sun and from the coldness of the night.

Not every old person can afford to play tennis or golf. Neither does every old person have the luxury of time to get involved in community civic projects because they have to earn a living despite their age and frailty.

What's even sadder is that most of them do not have solicitous family members to take care of them. Most of them do not have any loving *apo* to take them to McDonalds. Instead, what they

LETTERS

have are relatives who do not want to be burdened with senile, sickly persons and who would much rather dump them in some nursing home, forgetting they exist long before they actually die.

In this light, I am appealing to each one of us to take care of the elderly members of our society. Indeed, it is hard to be old, what with the numerous limitations and sudden bouts of depression. The least we can do is not to make things more difficult for them. Let us not fail to give them the importance and respect that they deserve.

It would also be a great idea if we could visit those in the nursing homes who have no relatives and spend time with them. Let us be extra understanding and patient with our *lolos* and *lolas*, in case they call us Gina instead of Karen. If we can't afford for them some expensive sport or hobby, let us at least not deprive them of our warmth, caring and attention. Let love not be a luxury for them too, for it is the best gift that we can ever give them especially this Christmas.—**KAREN KAYE STA. MARIA, 84 Matimtiman St., Teachers Village, Quezon City**

Singer keeping marketing operations in RP

YOUR Nov. 30, 2001 issue was most unfair as it inaccurately reported that "Singer's RP unit closes shop." This has caused much concern not only to Singer but to its hundreds of dealers nationwide, who have been calling since they read the news item.

The Singer Sewing Machine Co., or simply Singer, has not stopped operations in the Philippines. It has been doing business in the Philippines under a license issued by the Philippine government in 1910 to market Singer products, and continues to do so to this date. It has no intention of withdrawing from the Philippines. It continues to market in this country Singer brand household and industrial sewing machines, beds and furniture, refrigerators and freezers, home entertainment systems, cooking ranges and air-conditioning units.

Singer Industries Philippines Inc. is a separate Philippine entity. It was organized as a manufacturing firm. This is the company that ceased operation as a result of a change in the emphasis of our business in the Philippines from manufacturing to marketing and distribution.

As early as Sept. 14, 2000, the Singer family of companies emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States in just one year and earned profit that year. The Chapter 11 proceedings had no relation whatsoever with the shutdown of operations of the factory.

In the interest of fair reporting, we request that your Nov. 30, 2001 news item be corrected with a clarification of equal prominence that Singer Sewing Machine Co. has not shut down operations in the Philippines.—**WILFREDO C. ROLDAN, director, sales and receivables, Singer Philippine Management, 373 Bonifacio Drive, Port Area, Manila**

Afraid of having a second baby

THIS letter is in reaction to a letter, entitled "Rudeness and cruelty in a delivery room." (PDI 12/01/01)

I was a victim of rudeness and cruelty inside a delivery room, too, in a public hospital here in Baguio City. And just like those patients mentioned in that letter, I am poor.

My own experience is, I suppose, to borrow the words of Rina Jimenez-David "as common and as routine" as those told in the letter. I too was humiliated, threatened, cursed. The pain they caused me that night was beyond words. It was far worse than when I was being sewn up without anesthesia. My experience with them left me scared. So scared that I now have second thoughts about having another baby.

Now it's not just the money that prevents me from having another baby. The thought of going through their hands again scares me more. I suppose those who were with me that night in that delivery room have the same fear. And maybe all those who ever went there expecting to be treated like human being wish they had a choice.

I would like to commend the letter writer. It really is heartwarming to know that other people choose to be different, who show more care, patience and understanding to their fellowmen. In behalf of all the poor, underprivileged, "underschooled" people like me, we thank you with a grateful heart. I pray for you and your family.

I also pray that there will be more health workers like you. So that when the time comes for me to have my second baby, I pray that we will be treated by a doctor just like her.—**NOVIE JILL ABRERA, 2 Lower Pinget, Baguio City**

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News that makes a difference

Overloading on the MRT

THE MRT is now becoming an efficient mode of mass transportation. And it isn't only efficient but also convenient, though not during the rush hours.

During rush hours, the MRT is not safe anymore. Not because of the lack of security guards but because of the number of passengers inside the trains. Officials of the MRT should put a limit to the number of passengers aboard the trains. Overloading them is not safe especially since there are portions of the tracks when the coaches would shake and wiggle. If the train is too heavy, it might tilt and get derailed.

The government must try as soon as possible to attend to this issue for the safety of all MRT patrons. As they say, prevention is better than cure.—**JOAN OANES, jmoanes@edsamail.com.ph**

'Teng isa'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

AT TAIPEI'S airport a few weeks back, I overheard some Filipinas giggling as they gathered for a group photo. As their photographer took aim, one of the women posing for the photograph shouted out, "*Teng isa, teng isa.*"

I was amused. "*Teng isa*" is a Filipino rendition of the Mandarin "*teng isya,*" which roughly means, "Wait a bit." The women were obviously workers returning to Manila after finishing a contract. After the photo session, I overheard them talking with their Taiwanese manager and realized they'd picked up quite a few Mandarin words and phrases, even if the pronunciation and tone were not always too accurate.

But I'm not going to write about language today. What struck me, besides the "*teng isa,*" was the jovial mood the Filipinas were in. Waiting around in airports—Bangkok, Vancouver, Sydney—I've learned to pick up the almost unique laughter Filipinos have. It's actually more specific to Filipinas, a mixture of the coquette and the child, carefree and celebratory. (Pinoy men are different: you spot them by the way they strut around, usually in sunglasses and denim jackets and lug shopping bags overflowing with duty-free liquor and cigarettes.)

I first discovered this Pinay laughter in Geneva when, on the fifth day of a tedious meeting, I went into a department store for a break. After walking around a bit, I suddenly realized something was "wrong": I kept hearing peals of laughter rolling through the supermarket. Geneva being a dour Calvinist city, I hadn't heard anyone laughing for the last five days and now it seemed someone was making up for it. I followed the laughter and found its source: a Filipina sales clerk.

"You're such a happy people," people always tell me when they find out I'm Filipino, and then they tell me about a Filipino they know at work, or a friend's housekeeper or nanny. Inevitably, they'll go on to describe how Filipinos are always smiling, laughing, partying, singing, dancing.

I smile back, but with a bit of sadness. Foreigners fail to see that there's an element of compensation involved in our jovial demeanor. We laugh, or make ourselves laugh, to brace ourselves for adversity and hardship.

The Filipino is a homebody (even on short trips we count the number of nights left before we return home). But when you're an overseas contract worker, making a countdown is a bit more difficult: you can't go, "*Tatlong daang tulog na lang*" (300 more nights). Living overseas, there's a greater need to be with fellow Filipinos, so every chance there is, including discovering a visiting Filipino in the streets, our overseas Pinoy will organize an instant party.

The party is a chance to recreate what's back home. I was reading Gilda Cordero-Fernando and M.G. Chaves' great new book "Pinoy Pop Culture" and realized how much of what the book describes is carried overseas by Filipinos, which means you can be in some outback town in Australia and still attend a Pinoy party serving spaghetti with sweet sauce, topped off with a *macapuno* dessert and some sweet sparkling wine.

The party, too, allows you to laugh, sing, dance. Now, if you're in a place like Geneva, where there aren't too many *kababayan*, it becomes a bit more difficult. In retrospect, I think the Filipina salesclerk in Geneva had such a hearty laugh (*bigay na bigay*, we would say in Tagalog) because it was her way of purging her loneliness. Perhaps, too, by laughing out loud when we're away from home, we hope a fellow Filipino will recognize that laugh and come running, "*Uy, kabayan*!"

Our happiness and resilience has its limits though. The laughter during parties eventually gives way to serious discussions about the tribulations that come with living away from home. Lately when I run into overseas Filipinos our conversations become terribly somber.

Overseas Filipinos are beginning to feel the effects of the global economic crisis. In Hong Kong, Filipino domestic helpers face another reduction in their minimum wage, the second decrease in three years. In Taipei last month, I was with other UP professors in a restaurant when Anna Marie, a Filipina waitress, approached us and struck up a conversation about the economic crisis.

She was quite well informed about current events and went into a long discussion about the World Trade Organization and competition from mainland China, and about Taiwanese business people moving their factories into mainland China, which means lost jobs in Taiwan. Eventually, Anna Marie said, Taiwan would become just like the Philippines. The doomsday scenario was, of course, exaggerated but her commentary did capture the angst Filipinos have as they watch the job market contract.

Ironically, the response sometimes is to just go underground. Fearful about the prospects of returning to the Philippines and not finding a new overseas job, Filipinos will just stay on after a contract expires. But being underground only reinforces the angst, generating new fears and paranoia.

Friendships and personal relationships become even more important emotional anchors. Ranjit Devraj, an Indian journalist from the Inter Press Service, was at the Taipei meeting I attended and was able to do lengthy interviews with overseas Filipinos. In a smoky Taipei bar called Manila Pub, he interviewed one Filipino worker who told him: "Filipinos who come to Taiwan smoke, drink and have messy affairs far more than they do back home. And they all claim to be single."

Devraj also interviewed a priest who said he was reluctant to solemnize marriages among Filipinos because so many were using falsified papers, which means false identities, false ages, false marital status.

There aren't too many choices for our overseas workers. It's too easy to say, "Come home. We may not have jobs here but at least it's home." No, it just doesn't work out that way. For now, all we can tell our Filipinos overseas is, "*Teng isa*, it isn't time yet to come home."

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

Gov't didn't pay for FVR's travels

IN THE DEC. 5 issue of the INQUIRER, Neal Cruz wrote that former President Fidel V. Ramos "continues to travel far and wide—at the people's expense."

This statement is absolutely untrue, reckless and irresponsible. To set the record straight and make Cruz's job a lot easier, the facts are:

Ramos' travels abroad were made upon the invitation of foreign governments, private business organizations and various international fora on trade, technology, environment, health, education and other fields. Needless to state, the expenses for these trips were shouldered by the host countries and organizations. Not a single trip abroad made by Ramos as a private citizen was made at the Philippine government's expense.

In all of Ramos' trip abroad, his office issues a departure statement which indicates the purpose of the trip, including the groups, organizations and personalities he will meet and interact with. Upon arrival, Ramos issues an arrival statement which summarizes the work and activities undertaken during the trip. The arrival and departure statements are distributed to the media.

In addition, after all these trips, Ramos submits a summary report to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, copy furnished Cabinet members and officials concerned. This report covers the details of the trip, including Ramos' observations and recommendations. This was also his practice during the time of former President Joseph Estrada.

In fine, Ramos' travels abroad is part of his continuing commitment as a concerned private citizen, to promote Philippine interests abroad—in all instances, at no government expense—particularly in attracting investments, trade, tourism, technology transfer and other forms of economic cooperation toward our country.—**FRUMENCIO A. LAGUSTAN, spokesperson for former President Fidel V. Ramos, Ramos Peace and Development Foundation Inc., 26th Floor, Urban Bank Plaza, Urban Avenue, Makati City**

The WORLD

LUVERNE B. GUECO, EDITOR

AN ANTI-TALIBAN fighter, covered with dust and carrying a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, rides a truck to the battlefield in the Tora Bora mountains Dec. 16. REUTERS

Volunteer warriors adrift

ISLAMABAD—Osama bin Laden's foreign volunteers, who came to wage a "jihad" or holy war, are now adrift in Afghanistan after losing their Taliban allies.

Once considered "guests" of the Taliban theocracy in Afghanistan, they are now openly despised by the Afghan people as well as their own countries.

Their confinement in a final stronghold in eastern Afghanistan's Tora Bora region bordering Pakistan, beset by Afghan opponents, US and British special forces and B-52 bombers in the skies above, now appears likely to end in defeat.

However the exact number of Arab, Chechen, Pakistani and other foreigners fighting alongside the Taliban as part of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida organization remains unknown.

Most observers nominate a figure of several thousand—including at least one American, an Australian and another fighter claiming to be French—who came to support the Taliban's fundamentalist application of Islamic rule.

Some among their ranks, like other foreign warriors before them, now have families of their own in Afghanistan.

But many have been denounced by their own countries because of their commitment to both the war against the Northern Alliance here and involvement in acts of terrorism, such as the Sept. 11 airborne strikes in New York and Washington.

Once feared when the Taliban and its supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar ruled Afghanistan and offered them shelter, these foreign fighters are now hated by many Afghans.

Even the tribal Pashtuns, from whose southern homeland the Taliban emerged, are now blaming their foreign guests for the plight of the country.

Witnesses said dozens of Arab Taliban fighters were massacred in the streets of Kabul after the entry of Northern Alliance troops on Nov. 13. And with defeat looming in Tora Bora, the foreign volunteers are being squeezed between the pincer of hostile locals and the blocking of escape routes over the mountains into Pakistan.

Hundreds of foreign fighters taken prisoner in the northern city of Kunduz were also killed during a bloody revolt in a fortress-prison in Qala-i-Jangi in Mazar-i-Sharif.

According to witnesses, Chechen fighters, many of whom were veterans of the war against Russia in their homeland, triggered the revolt that claimed the life of a US CIA operative, Johnny "Mike" Spann.

It was also at Qala-i-Jangi that the capture of 20-year-old John Walker, a convert to Islam, stunned America.

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, whose city's landmark World Trade Center was one of two key targets on Sept. 11 along with the Pentagon in Washington, said Sunday consideration should be given to imposing the death penalty on Walker.

"When you commit treason against the United State of America, particularly at a time when the United States of America is in peril of attack and further attack, the death penalty is an appropriate remedy to consider," Giuliani said. *AFP*

LA airport evacuated in scare

LOS ANGELES—A security alert triggered by an apparent computer glitch forced the evacuation of hundreds of passengers from a terminal Los Angeles International Airport on Sunday, officials said.

LAX's Terminal 2 was cleared for nearly two hours, causing backups and chaos at the busy airport, after baggage screeners detected a possible weapon inside a carry-on bag but mistakenly let the bag through the checkpoint.

"At 6:27 p.m., airport police received a phone call from Terminal 2 indicating that the passenger screener thought that a possible weapon got through," said Nancy Castles of Los Angeles World Airports.

The terminal was shut down for security sweeps until nearly 8:30 p.m. as police used surveillance video footage to track down the owner of the suspect, which was searched revealing no weapons, she said.

Arriving flights were diverted to a remote area of the airport while five departing flights were delayed, causing confusion and a crush of anxious passengers in the terminal.

A plane that had docked just as the alert began was directed away from the terminal, while passengers remained in the aircraft for an hour, Castles said.

New software had recently been installed on the screening devices and the detection of the weapons could have been a glitch in the system, she said.

Security at US airports has been massively increased since hijackers commandeered four planes on September 11 and flew three of them into New York's World Trade Center and Washington's Pentagon, killing around 4,000 people.

A fourth crashed in a field in the eastern state of Pennsylvania.

A rash of alerts has been reported at airports across the country as authorities, taking no chances amid, step up vigilance and tighten security. *AFP*

Al-Qaida's arms ambition worries US

WASHINGTON—US officials on Sunday acknowledged they were wary of efforts by the al-Qaida network to obtain weapons of mass destruction, noting that they are examining more than 50 sites in Afghanistan as a result.

"It is frightening," Gen. Tommy Franks, head of the US military campaign in Afghanistan, told ABC television Sunday.

He said the number of Afghan sites that US officials are examining "has grown to something a bit over 50 installations," from around 40 in November.

"Some of the information that we have gained would allude to perhaps—I don't want to call them science projects, but would make reference to things like poisons, the building of explosives, some of these cookbooks that we have talked about before that talk about terrorist approaches to problems and how buildings can be destroyed, and so forth," Franks said.

Asked whether the organization led by Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden had the means to create weapons of mass destruction—including nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological weapons—Franks replied: "This isn't a confirmation yet."

He also said he was unable to confirm reports in the British press Sunday that documents outlining a planned bomb attack on London were found at an al-Qaida training camp in Kandahar.

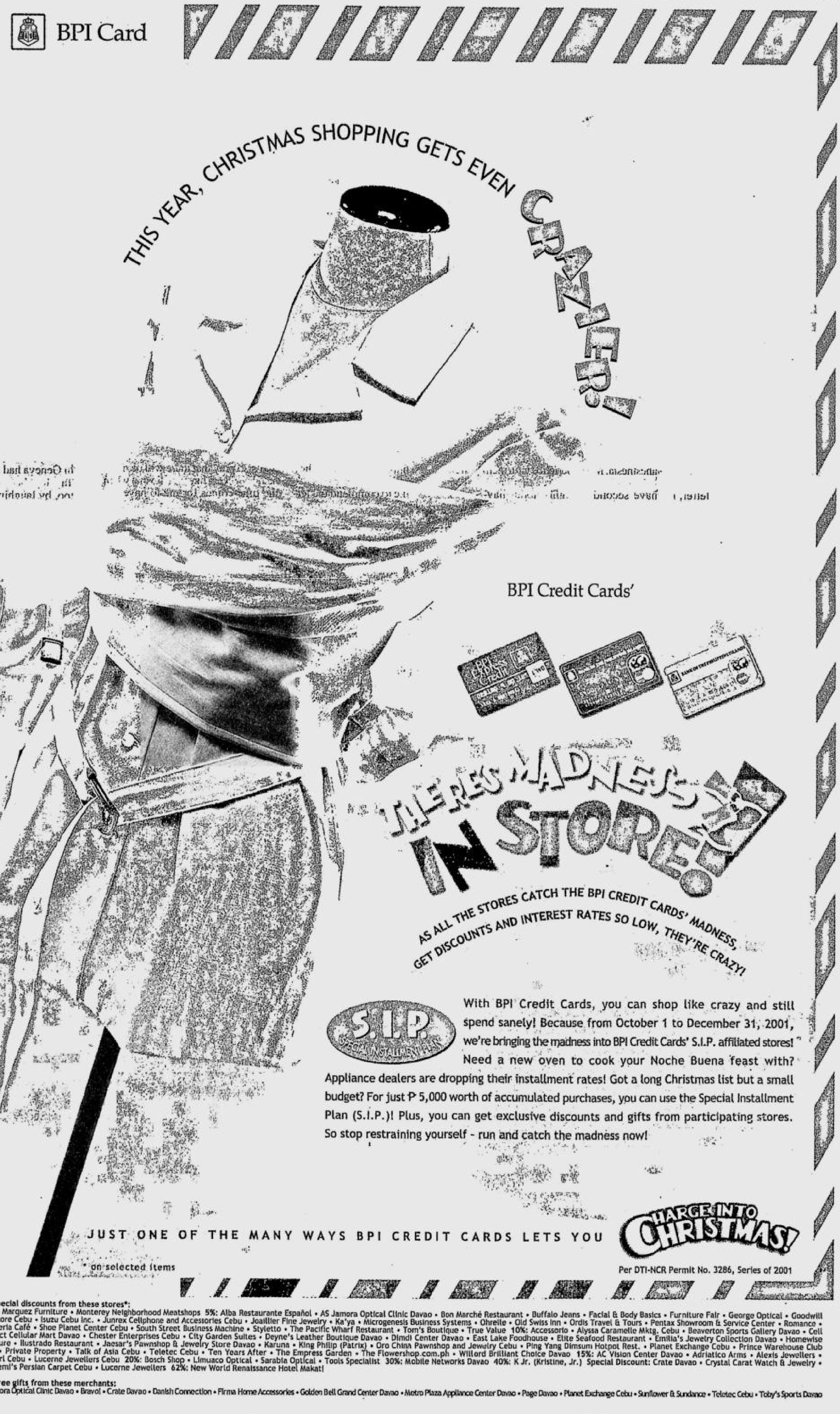
The Independent on Sunday said it had seen detailed notes found in a Kandahar terrorist "safe house" for an al-Qaida plan to detonate a huge car bomb in the Moorgate area of London via remote control.

The plans were accompanied by instructions on how to assemble the bomb and get it in position in a van, as well as how to explode it.

US national security adviser Condoleezza Rice told CBS television that the prospect underscores just how "dangerous" the al-Qaida network is.

"We take Osama bin Laden at his word when he says that it is a religious duty of the al-Qaida network and its allies to acquire weapons of mass destruction," Rice said.

But one of the ways to prevent such a scenario, she added, is to "break up this network, so that they can't carry this out." *AFP*



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India considering 'all options'

NEW DELHI—India is considering "all options" in its response to what New Delhi claims was a Pakistan-backed suicide attack on its parliament complex last week, and a final decision will be taken by the heads of government and the military.

"The government is seriously considering all options," Home Minister L.K. Advani said in an interview with Star TV broadcast Monday.

Advani, considered a hardliner within the Indian Cabinet, was responding to a question on whether India might be willing to launch strikes on alleged terrorist training camps in Pakistan and to adopt a "hot pursuit" policy toward Muslim militants crossing the disputed Indo-Pakistan border in Kashmir.

India says it has enough evidence to suggest that Thursday's attack on the parliament compound in New Delhi was backed by Pakistani military intelligence and executed by Pakistan-based militant groups.

Five militants were killed in their daylight assault on the parliament, which left another eight people dead, most of them security personnel.

In a separate interview with Aaj Tak television, Advani said a final decision on how to respond to the attack would be taken in consultation with the Indian military.

"After taking into account all the aspects . . . the political leadership and military leadership would jointly take a decision," he said.

Pakistan has condemned the attacks on parliament, while denying the involvement of its intelligence services and warning India against any reprisal.

Islamabad has also offered to carry out a joint investigation with India if New Delhi is willing to share the evidence it has accumulated so far—an offer Advani treated with a heavy dose of skepticism.

"We have doubts about their (Pakistan's) intentions," the home minister told The Hindu newspaper.

"They have the temerity to suggest that the attacks was engineered by Indian agencies.

"If they are serious in rooting out terrorism, they better show it and it becomes their duty to end all support to terrorism," Advani said.

Hardline elements with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's BJP party have called on the government to strike against the guerrilla camps in Pakistan and to pursue militants fleeing over the disputed border into Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. *AFP*

One-China policy key to Taiwan talks–China

BEIJING—China has called for renewed dialogue with Taiwan but warned the island it is poisoning the possibility of such talks by failing to accept the "one-China" principle, state media said on Monday.

"Our efforts to push for the resumption of cross-Straits talks and negotiations on the basis of the one-China principle will never slacken," the official China Daily quoted Chen Yunlin, director of the Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office, as saying.

China has been on the alert for any move toward Taiwan statehood since the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) victory in Taiwan parliamentary elections earlier this month.

Chen's comments followed a post-election call from Taiwan for a resumption of the stalled dialogue between the two sides.

He was speaking on Sunday at an event marking the 10th anniversary of a body formed by Beijing to conduct talks with Taiwan, which it regard as a rebel province to be reunited by with the mainland—by force if necessary.

Chen said Taipei's refusal to recognize the one China policy that Taiwan and the mainland are part of a single country "would poison the cross-strait relations and heighten tension and confrontation and eventually damage the interests of Taiwan compatriots," the official Xinhua news agency said.

Talks between the semi-official Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and the Taipei's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) broke down in 1999 when Taiwan's then-president Lee Teng-hui called for state-to-state relations. *Reuters*

WET SANTA REUTERS

A diver wearing a Santa Claus costume waves as he swims in an aquarium in Seoul Dec. 17. The display aimed to promote a local aquarium shop in the run up to Christmas.

Saddam's bodyguard among boat people

SYDNEY—A former member of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's personal guard was in detention Monday after entering Australia illegally with a boatload of asylum seekers, a government MP said.

Government backbencher Ross Cameron said the man had destroyed papers detailing his past life, but an investigation by immigration authorities had revealed his identity.

The government had also received information that a man involved in the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington had entered the United States as a refugee.

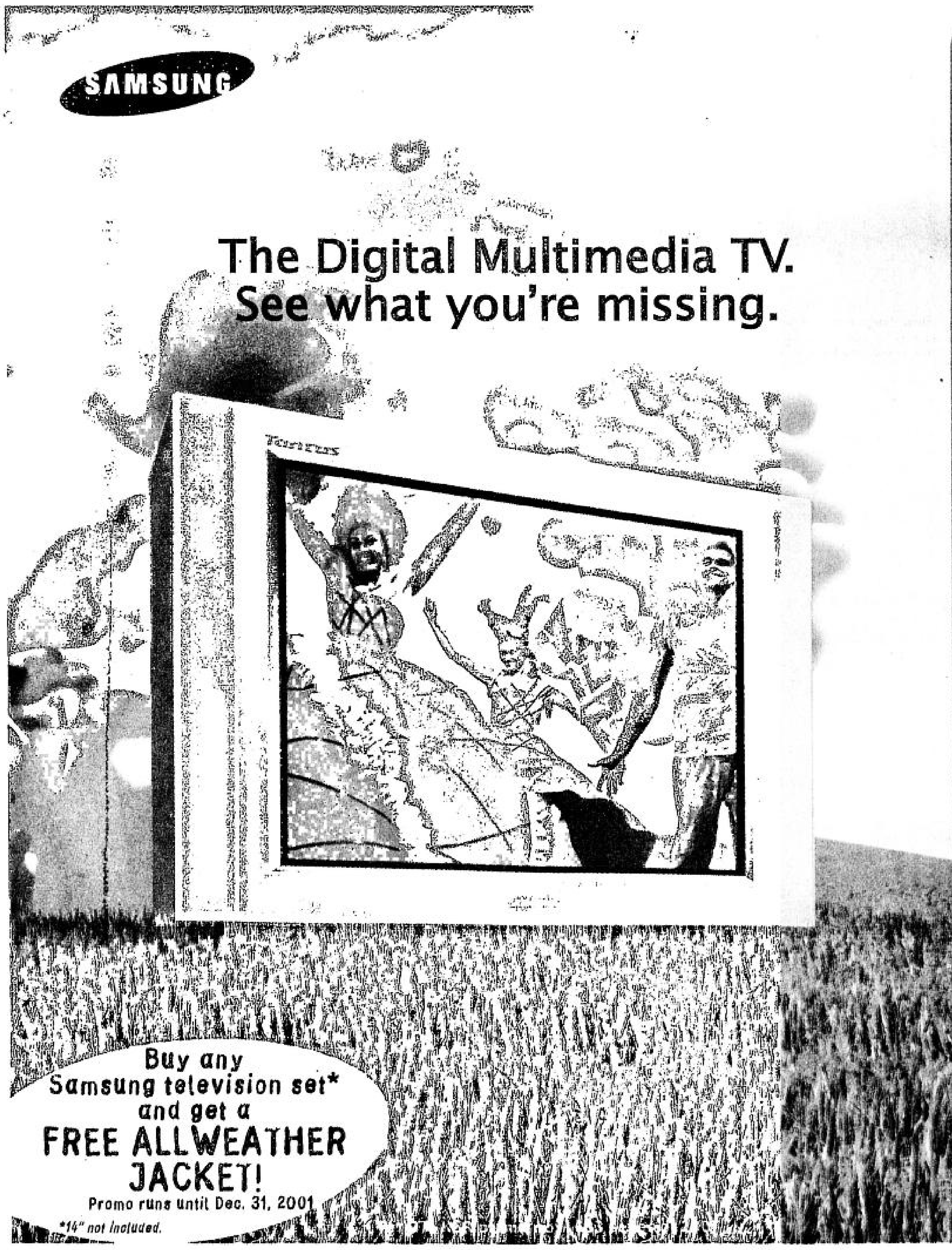
"We have one person in detention at the moment who arrived by boat who was found to have destroyed his papers," Cameron told commercial television.

"But after thorough search and investigations he was found to be on the personal guard of Saddam Hussein in Iraq."

Cameron said he understood a man implicated in the September attacks in the United States had been a US asylum seeker.

"We can't be in a situation where we're somehow branding everyone who arrives by boat as a terrorist," he said.

"But it is nonetheless the case that there is a very high duty of care on our arrivals and migration staff to go through the due diligence to ensure that those character and criminal issues have been fully investigated." *AFP*



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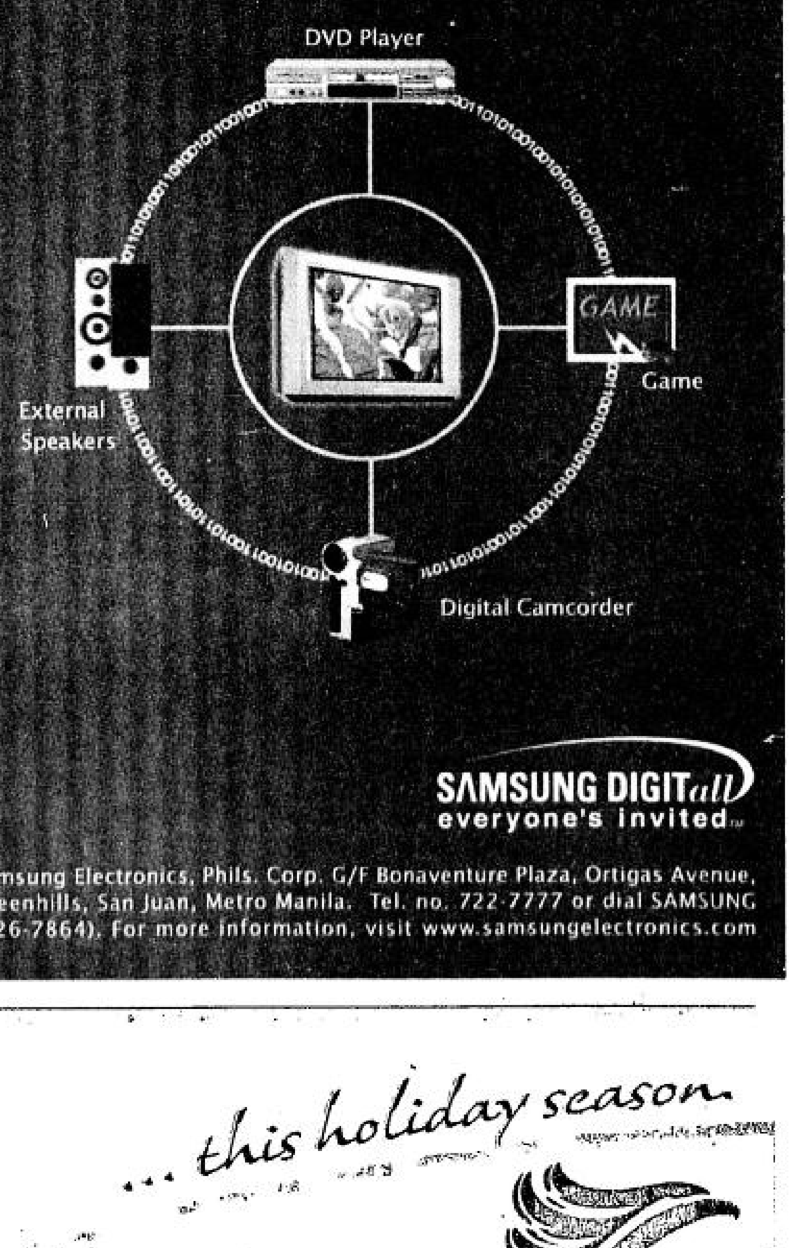

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Arafat urges end to attacks on Israel

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Sunday called for an end to attacks on Israel and pledged to punish the perpetrators, in one of his strongest statements yet aimed at stopping almost 15 months of violence.

Washington, which has put intense pressure on Arafat to rein in militants, welcomed his speech as "constructive" but followed Israel's line in saying words alone were not enough, and that Arafat must back up his promises with actions.

"I am calling once again for a halt to all operations, particularly suicide attacks which we have always condemned," Arafat said in a televised address marking the end of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan.

He said such attacks served as a pretext for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to escalate what he called a "ferocious war" on the Palestinian territories and against his administration in particular.

Only hours after Arafat's address, Israeli military sources reported that a mortar bomb had been fired on a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, breaking a relative calm over the day, but this was denied by a top Palestinian security official.

Israel cut off all contact with Arafat on Thursday and declared him "irrelevant" after a string of shooting attacks and suicide bombings against Israelis that triggered fierce retaliatory air strikes.

Arafat, looking far more assured than in recent television interviews from his offices in the West Bank where he is under virtual house arrest, slammed suicide bombings in particular, a direct attack on the radical Islamic groups that have used them to spark the massive Israeli backlash.

"I am saying now... I will call again to have a stop on any suicide operation and we will catch all these people and they will have to account to us," he said.

He stressed his Palestinian Authority had been democratically elected and he would come down hard on those who refused to respect his ceasefire declaration with Israel.

He said the only way ahead was for a return to talks and called on Sharon and the Israeli people to resume peace talks "immediately."

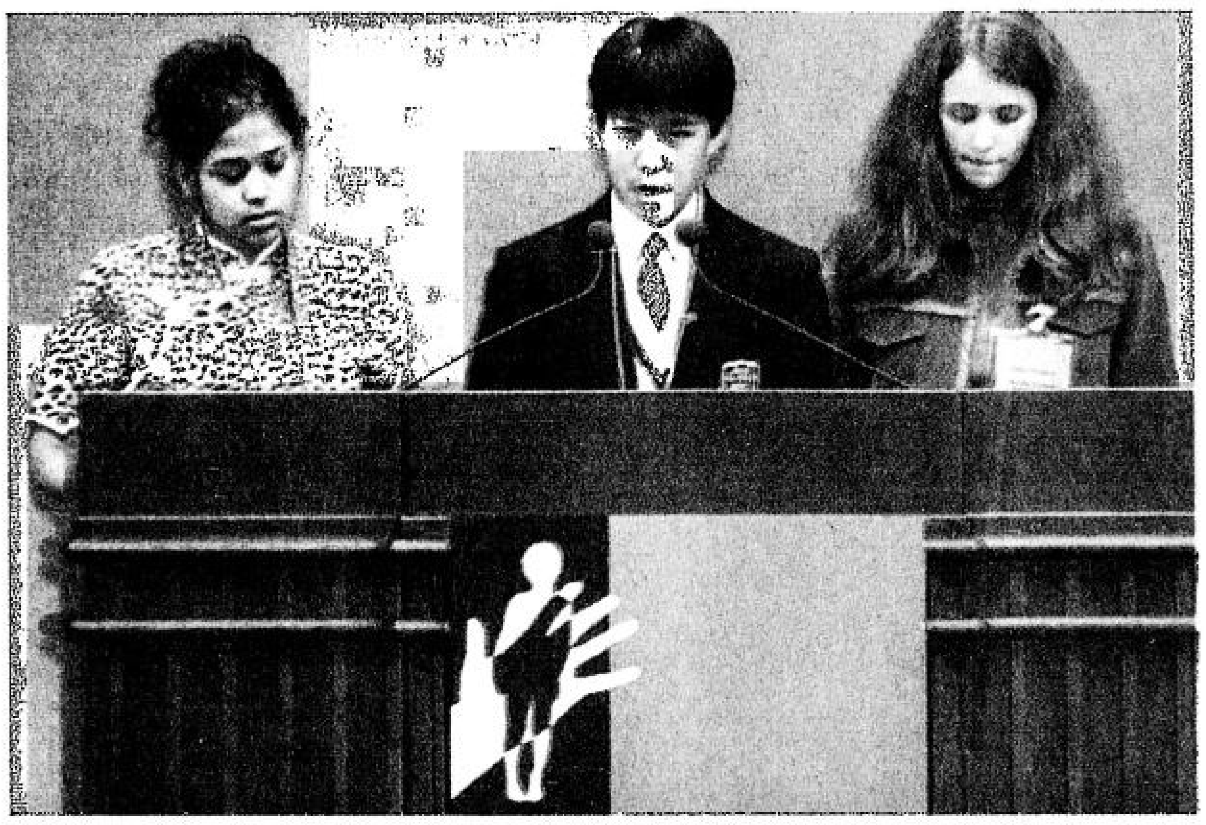
"We want a true Palestinian state, a state in the real sense of the word, with Jerusalem as its capital, next to Israel," Arafat said.

Israel's immediate response was one of skepticism.

"Worts will not do. There has to be deeds. He has to make the arrests to stop the terrorists on their way already to conduct terrorist activity in Jerusalem and Haifa and Beer Sheva," government spokesperson Raanan Gissin told reporters.

But another spokesperson said the call to end the suicide bombings was "positive," although he added Israel had expected Arafat to go further and condemn "terrorism in general," and announce an end to the Palestinian uprising that has cost more than 1,100 lives.

White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer said Arafat's speech was "constructive" but stressed that "what is important is that he now takes concrete action." *AFP*



JUNNOSUKE Tashiro of Japan (center) speaks as South Africa's Zeenith Edrahin (left) and Polina Mironova of Belarus listen at the opening session of a global conference against the commercial sexual exploitation of children, in Yokohama, Dec. 17.

REUTERS

Curb growing child sex trade, meet told

YOKOHAMA, Japan—Child prostitution and pornography involving minors is steadily rising, fuelled by the expansion of the Internet, delegates at the opening session of the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children heard Monday.

Trafficking in children (for sexual exploitation) "is on the increase in developing countries as well as developed nations, despite the efforts implemented by governments," which attended the first such congress in Stockholm in 1996, said Japanese justice minister Mayumi Moriyama in a keynote speech.

"The exploiters are increasingly cunning, and most worryingly, there is a huge increase in pedophile sites on the Internet," she said.

"Five years ago, we gathered in Stockholm to bring an end to these hateful criminal acts. Today, despite our efforts, the situation is getting worse," Japanese Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka told the more than 3,300 participants at the congress in a prepared speech.

Carol Bellamy, executive director of Unicef said every country was concerned about the problem of sexual exploitation of children and the congress would include a frank assessment of progress in the fight since the Stockholm conference.

"Each year millions of children—boys as well as girls are bought as well as sold like fresh produce commodities in a global sex industry, as we all know," Bellamy said.

The opening of the congress was also attended by Queen Silvia of Sweden, the honorary president of the Stockholm conference, who said she was "troubled" by the increase in sexual exploitation of children.

According to police sources, even if hundreds of pedophile websites were shut down every day, they would be replaced by others almost immediately, she said.

The four-day congress is jointly organized by Unicef, the Japanese government, End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism International,—a network working for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes—and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. *AFP*

US team in China for ABM talks

BEIJING—A team of US diplomats held talks in Beijing on Monday on President George W. Bush's decision to abandon a Soviet-era arms control treaty, an embassy spokesperson said.

The diplomats, who arrived over the weekend, were "consulting with China as a followup to their president's announcement on ABM treaty withdrawal" and would leave later on Monday, he added.

China has criticized the US decision to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which it regarded as a cornerstone of global stability.

It has called for multilateral talks to safeguard global peace and stability.

China says US plans to develop multibillion-dollar defense system that would shoot down incoming missiles not only threaten the global balance but could set off a new arms race.

Beijing fears a missile defense system would neuter its small nuclear forces—around two dozen missiles capable of reaching the United States—and a successful missile umbrella could be stretched to protect arch rival Taiwan.

Washington, however, has told China repeatedly it is developing the missile shield to protect against surprise attacks from "rogue states" like North Korea and Iraq and that it is was not being pursued with China in mind.

The US diplomats met officials at China's foreign ministry on Monday, the embassy spokesperson said, without giving details.

It was unclear if the diplomats would make other stops before returning to the United States and there was no immediate comment from the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

A US state department spokesperson said last week Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control Avis Bohlen would lead the group to China.

Bush called Chinese President Jiang Zemin last Thursday to discuss the decision to withdraw from the treaty, which Bush considers a Cold War relic.

State media said Jiang told Bush that China was willing to work with other countries to safeguard world peace and stability in the wake of the decision and advocated talks. *Reuters*

Astrology paper apologizes for rigging poll forecast

COLOMBO—A Sri Lankan astrological paper has apologized for its astronomically wrong forecast of parliamentary elections and confessed it was under the influence of politicians.

The Ira Handa, or Sun and Moon, said in its latest issue that the editor, Priyantha Ratnayake, had resigned over the paper's prediction that President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance (PA) would win the vote.

The P.A was routed at the Dec. 5 general elections—contrary to the Sun and Moon prediction under the newspaper's catch phrase: "Sun and Moon predictions never go wrong."

In its front-page confession, the paper said its credibility has been seriously damaged following the embarrassingly wrong forecast.

"In future, we will not be swayed by politicians and we promise to uphold the dignity of astrology," the paper's new editor Chanaka Nilantha said. "We made a mistake in mixing politics with astrology."

However, the paper will continue to be published by Priyantha Ratnayake, who is said to have been "bought" by the PA to predict just before the election that the former ruling party was winning.

Ratnayake was unavailable for comment, but a spokesperson said his whereabouts were unknown after attackers smashed windows of his office as vote results were announced.

With opinion polling still in its infancy in Sri Lanka, astrological predictions are believed to influence undecided voters and give an advantage to the political party favored by the seers.

The astrologers who predicted a victory for Kumaratunga's party have not been seen since results were announced and the man they wrote off as a loser, Ranil Wickremesinghe, was sworn in as the country's prime minister.

Wickremesinghe's then opposition United National Party (UNP) beat the PA by a whopping 37 seats in the 225-member assembly. The president's family bastion of Gampaha was also crushed by the UNP.

During the election campaign a senior editor of Sun and Moon, astrologer Vijayasri Jayasinghe, quit his job saying he could not play with planetary positions and make forecasts against his "science." *AFP*

Nepal emergency extended

KATMANDU—The government will maintain the state of emergency and will not negotiate with Maoist rebels until they give up arms and return to mainstream politics, a senior government . minister said Sunday.

"The government will withdraw the state of emergency only after the objectives of such a move is achieved," Information and Communication Minister Jayaprakash Gupta told reporters. "Unless the rebels gave up arms, publicly apologize to the Nepalese people and commit to come under the main stream democratic system, there will be no negotiations."

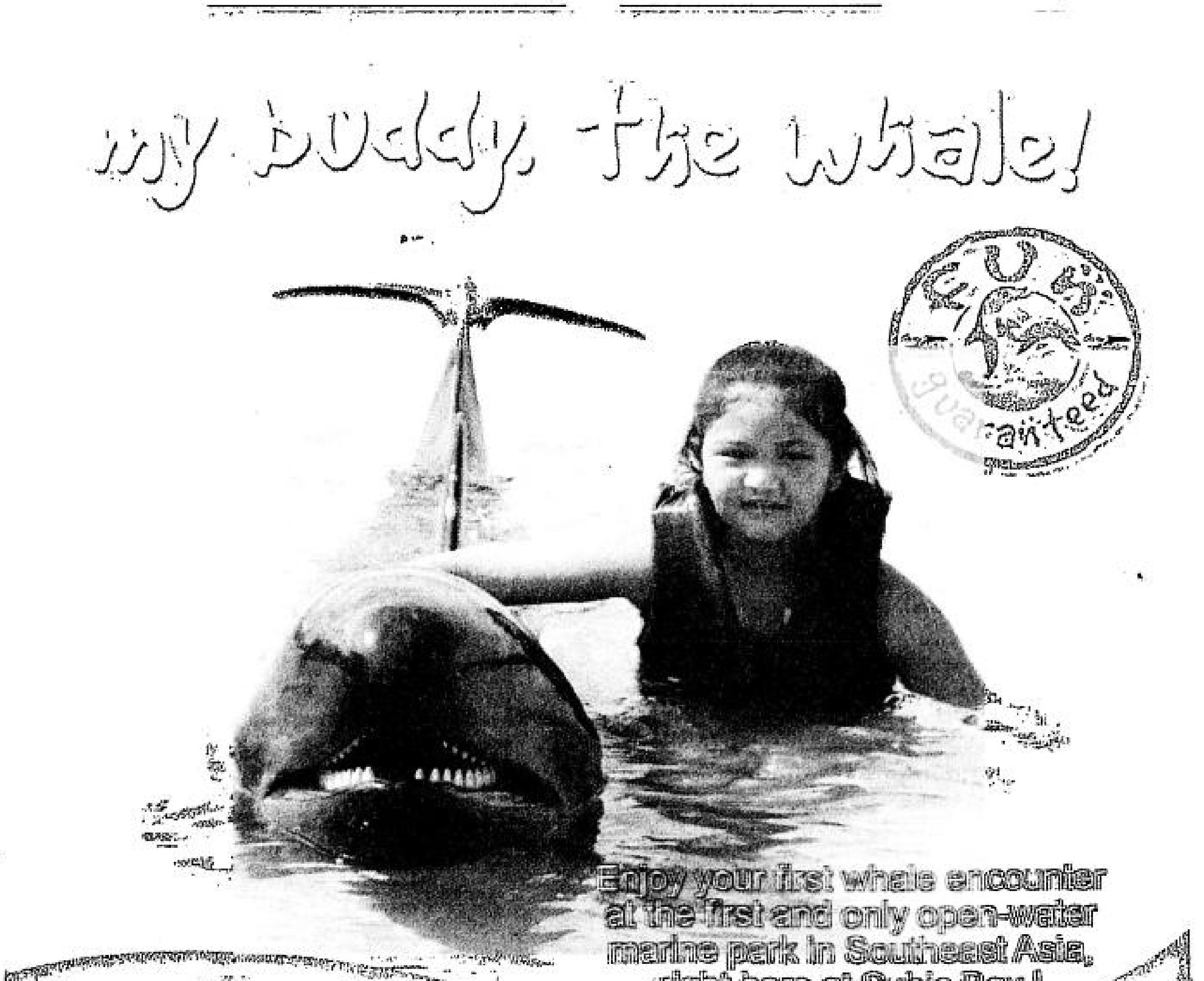
King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency on Nov. 26 and ordered the Royal Nepalese Army to fight against the Maoist rebels after they called off a four-month ceasefire and launched fresh attacks on government and security targets.

More than 300 Maoist guerrillas and nearly 100 security force personnel have been killed in just three weeks of rebels attacks and fierce retaliatory operations by the Army.

About 300 rebels have also been arrested after the military started raids on rebel targets.

On Sunday, Indian police arrested P. Pant, a Maoist leader, who had fled Nepal after the state of emergency was declared. He was arrested in northern village of Uttar Pradesh state, 300 km east of New Delhi, following a tip-off from Nepal's police.

Led by commander Prachanda—whose real name is Pushpa Kumar Dahal—the guerrillas have been fighting in remote mountainous areas since 1996 to abolish Nepal's constitutional monarchy and create a socialist republic. *AP*



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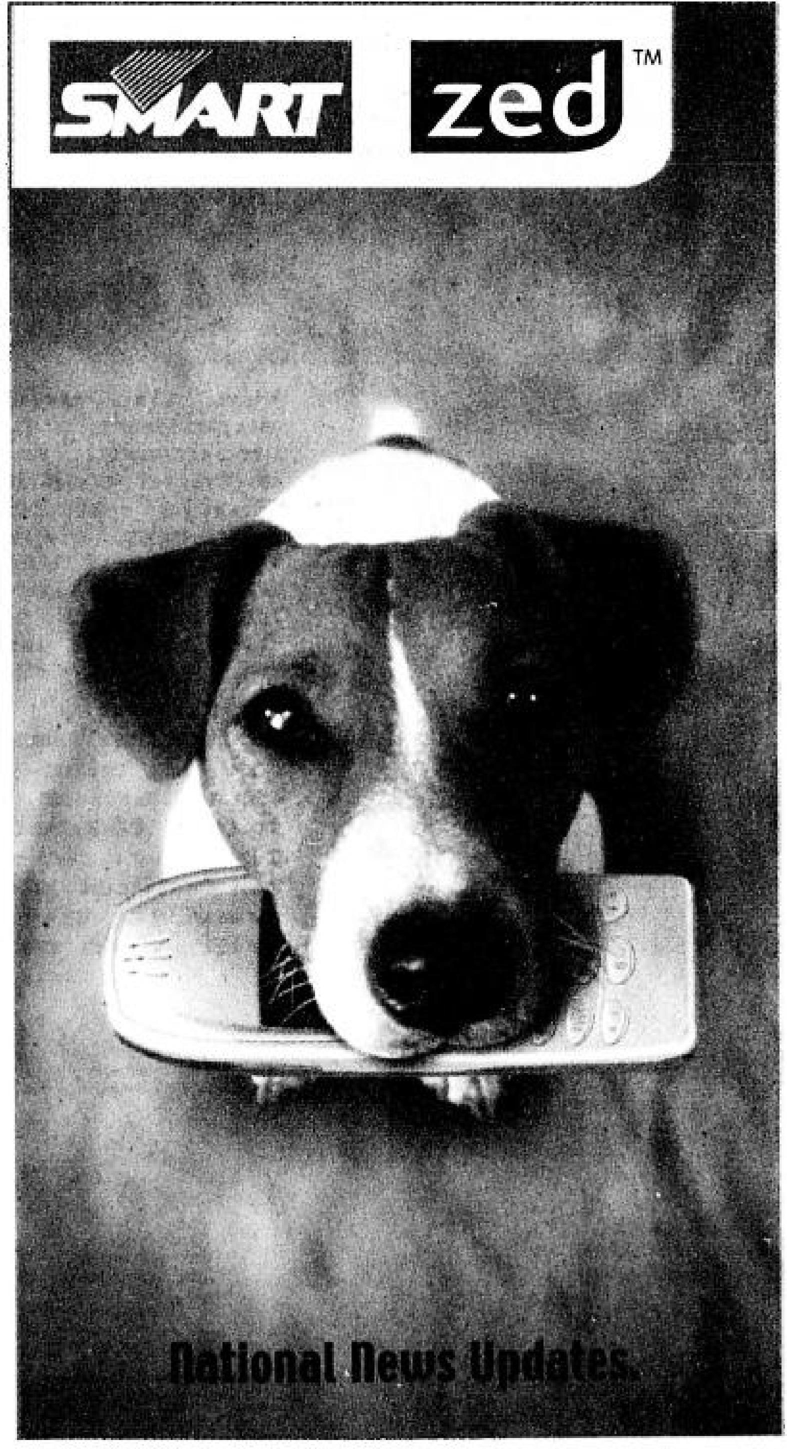

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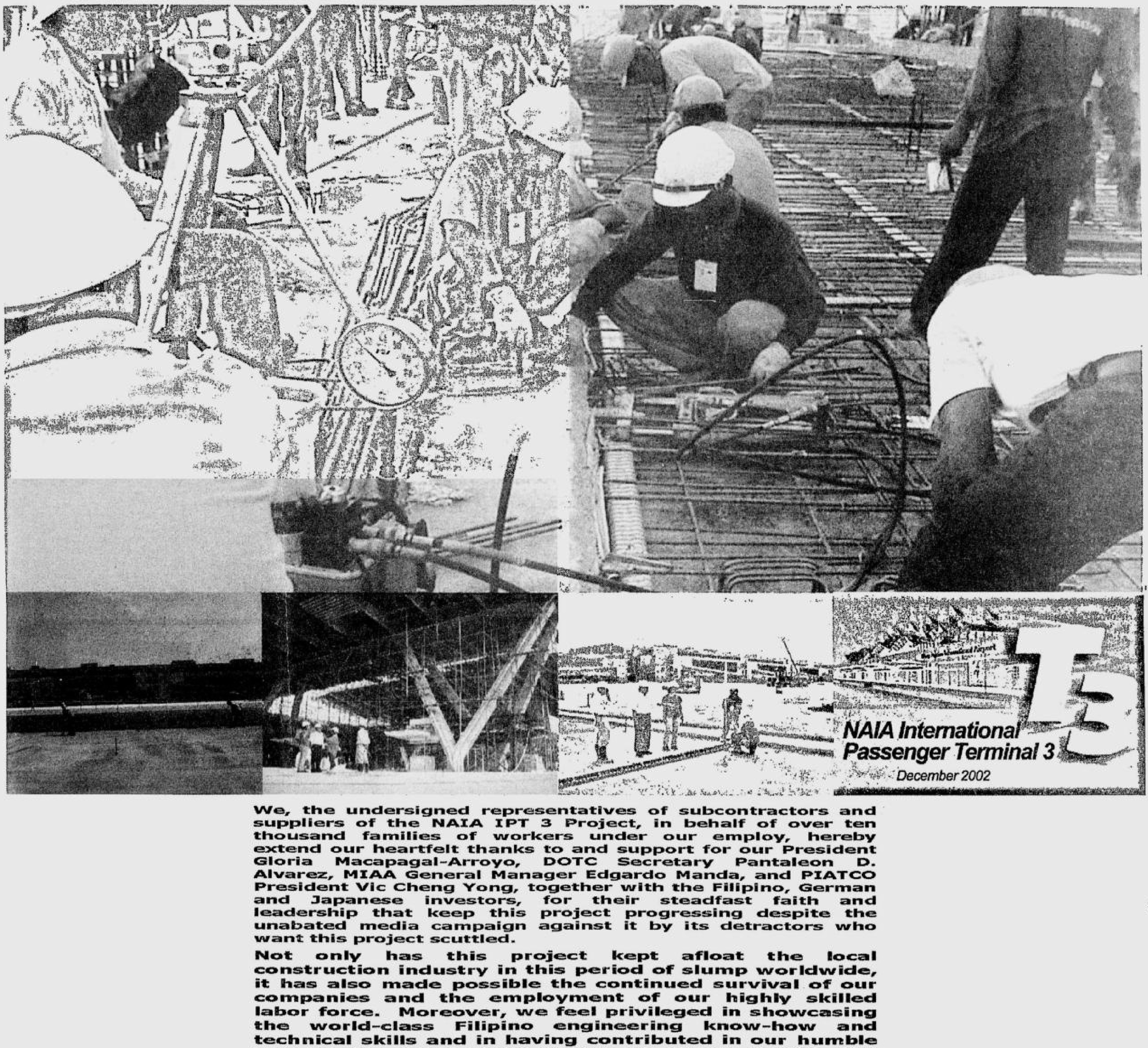

We, the undersigned representatives of subcontractors and suppliers of the NAIA IPT 3 Project, in behalf of over ten thousand families of workers under our employ, hereby extend our heartfelt thanks to and support for our President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, DOTC Secretary Pantaleon D. Alvarez, MIAA General Manager Edgardo Manda, and PIATCO President Vic Cheng Yong, together with the Filipino, German and Japanese investors, for their steadfast faith and leadership that keep this project progressing despite the unabated media campaign against it by its detractors who want this project scuttled.

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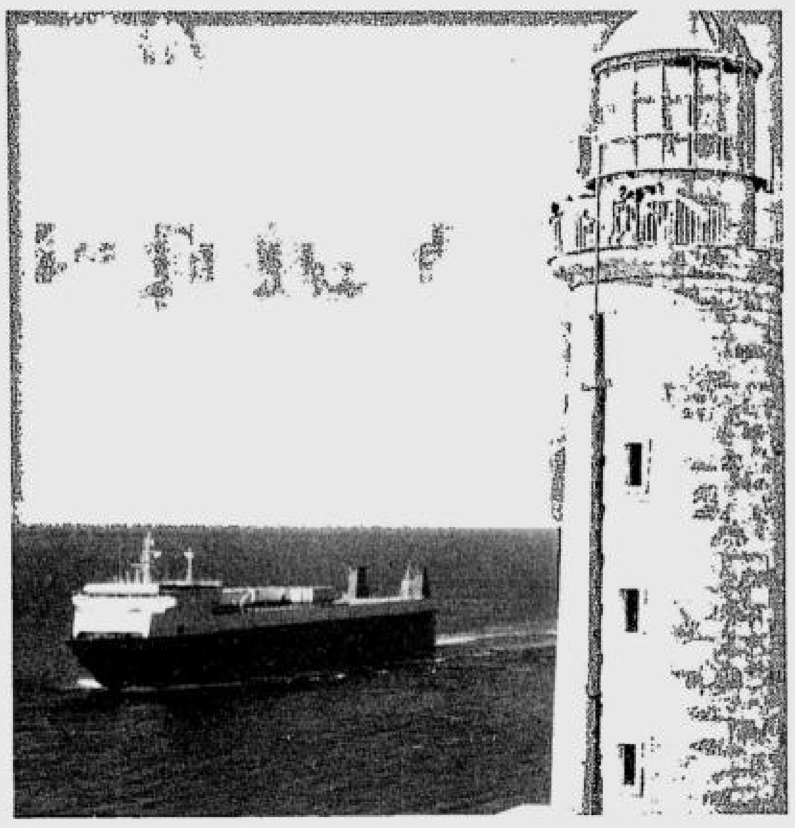
NAIA IPT 3 Subcontractors & Suppliers

First shipment of US food since 1962 arrives in Cuba



THE freighter Express passes the lighthouse in the Bay of Havana Dec. 8 carrying 500 tons of frozen chicken parts from the US. AP

HAVANA—A ship carrying US chicken arrived in Cuba on Sunday, completing the first direct food trade between the two politically estranged countries since the United States slapped an embargo on the Communist-run island in 1962.

The historic sales, prompted by Hurricane Michelle, which devastated the Caribbean island's crops last month, were the result of a year-old law that exempts food and medicine from US trade sanctions.

The MV Express, a container vessel owned by Florida-based Crowley Liner Services, glided into Havana Bay with 500 tons of frozen chicken sold by a US subsidiary of the French firm Louis Dreyfus Corp.

A second ship carrying 24,000 tons of corn sold by US agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland arrived later in the day.

"It is our hope that these initial sales to Cuba will serve the purpose of proving the point that it is a logical thing for Cuba and the United States to trade with one another," ADM executive Larry Cunningham said as the Crowley ship docked across Havana Bay.

"It is our feeling the best way to build relations between countries is to have them become trading partners," Cunningham added.

Both vessels left the United States on Friday, with more shipments expected in the coming weeks as ADM and others make good on about $30 million in contracts for 200,000 tons of US wheat, corn, soybeans, rice and chicken.

The sales come despite Cuban President Fidel Castro's pledge not to buy "a single grain of US rice or aspirin" soon after the new law was signed.

He claimed that it discriminated against Cuba because the United States still prohibited private and government financing, as well as the import of Cuban products.

But Castro apparently changed his mind after Hurricane Michelle ripped across Cuba.

The sales were expected to heighten debate in the United States between farmers and others who want the embargo lifted, and Cuban exile groups who demand even tougher sanctions.

Pedro Alvarez, president of state-run Alimport, which made the purchases, seemed to hope they would do just that.

"US producers do not have markets for all their products and Cuba is a secure market," Alvarez said.

"This has an impact. American food producers are learning a Cuban market exists, that it is a market that wants products, and a market they are losing because of US laws," he added.

President George W. Bush has said he strongly supports the US trade embargo against its neighbor 160 km south of Florida, but moves are under way in the US Congress to further loosen the sanctions.

US agribusinesses have voiced hope for additional sales to Cuba, which purchases some $800 million in food commodities each year. *Reuters*

Yet another bomb alert hits China

BEIJING—China has been hit by yet another bomb blast, state media yesterday said, following a series of 24 explosions which killed seven people from the end of last week.

The most recent explosion happened at 12:45 a.m. Sunday at the living quarters of a small collective farm in the suburbs of Guiyang city in southwestern China's Guangxi province, the China News Service's Internet site said.

A bomb was placed outside the front door of a house occupied by Qin Aiwen, a farm official who was also head the farm's internal local-level justice administration.

No one was killed or injured, but the force of the blast broke the windows of nearly every house on the street, the report said.

A reporter arriving at the scene saw the street littered with glass and many windows cracked or shattered.

The bomb had blown a small crater in the ground and cracked a nearby cement pole, the report said. The house's wooden front door had been blown away.

The report said Qin had worked at the farm for more than 10 years, but did not have any major conflicts with others.

It was the latest in a string of bomb blasts in China in the past three days.

Most of these appeared to be revenge attacks, highlighting the severe difficulties Chinese authorities face in dealing with crime involving explosives, which are still easily obtainable despite a crackdown this year.

On Saturday, a bomb exploded at a busy McDonald's fast food restaurant in the northwestern city of Xian, killing two people, including the man believed to be the perpetrator, and injuring 27 others.

A day earlier, a man seeking revenge against his former in-laws and people with whom he had economic disputes, set off up to 24 explosions in the southern Guangdong province—20 in the city of Zhanjiang and three in the city of Jiangmen—state media said.

The bombings in Guangdong killed five people and injured seven others. *AFP*

Taiwan rejects offer of used Indian subs

TAIPEI—Taiwan has turned down a proposed deal to buy four used submarines from a third country amid concerns that Washington's offer to sell Taipei eight diesel submarines may be aborted, a report said Monday.

A former US congressman tried to broker the deal during his visit to Taiwan early this month, a trip the Pentagon "fully understood," the United Daily News quoted an unnamed military source as saying. The paper did not identify the former congressman.

It said the four diesel-powered vessels are believed to be German-built 209-class submarines which had been serving the Indian Navy for up to 14 years.

The paper said the Indian Navy is building two nuclear-powered submarines.

The US broker felt the deal would allow Taiwan's Navy to boost its submarine fleet in two years at a relatively low cost, the paper said, without specifying the price.

However the deal was rejected by Taiwan military authorities despite US guarantees of after-sales maintenance and spare parts.

The paper said the proposed deal carried a "political message" that Washington's offer to sell Taipei eight conventional submarines may be aborted. However it may also reflect Washington's growing desire that Taiwan play a greater role in checking the expansion of the Chinese Navy.

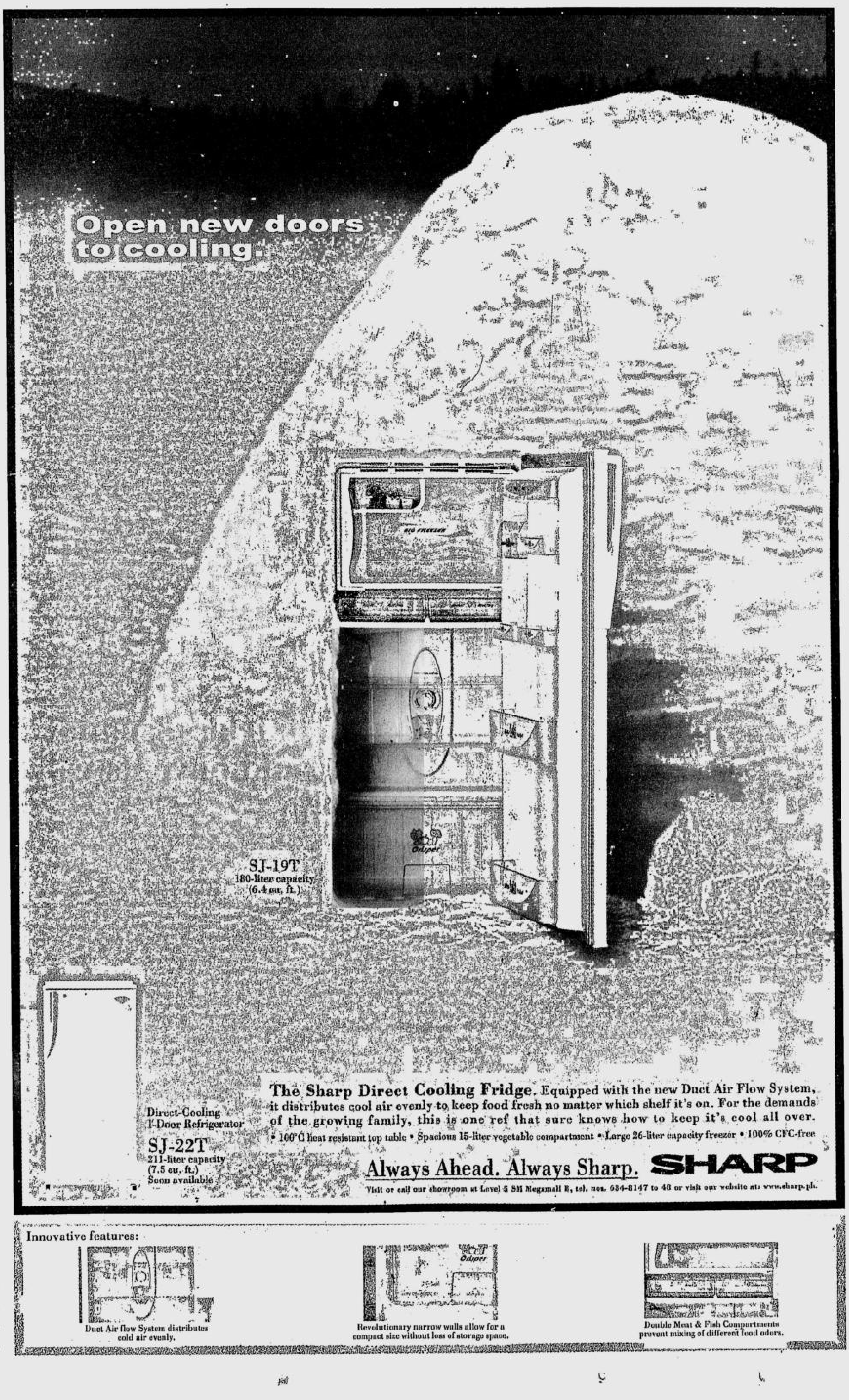
US President George W. Bush in April approved the sale of eight diesel-electric submarines as part of Washington's most comprehensive arms package to Taipei since 1992.

But the US has not built conventional submarines for more than 40 years and designing an entirely new one would be prohibitively expensive. Therefore, the most likely solution would involve foreign participation.

Military sources here have said Taiwan's Navy favors German 209-class or Dutch-designed Moray submarines.

But both countries have said they would not get involved in arms sales to the island, which Beijing regard as part of its territory to be unified with the mainland by force, if necessary.

Taiwan's Navy currently operates a fleet of four submarines including two Dutch-built Sword Dragon submarines and two aging US vessels. *AFP*



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500 Nur followers to lay down arms

Sultan says renegades just waiting for terms

JOLO, Sulu—Some 500 followers of resurgent Moro rebel Nur Misuari are ready to lay down their arms as soon as the terms for their surrender have been ironed out, according to a sultan aware of negotiations for the surrender.

Sultan Esmail Kiram of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo, who is heading the negotiations, said he was just awaiting for safe conduct passes from the Southern Command in Zamboanga City for his emissaries so they can return to the camp of Misuari loyalists to finalize the agreement.

Sultan Esmail strongly denied reports that he had a hand in the arrest of Misuari in Malaysia where he is detained, even as he revealed for the first time Malaysia's involvement in the creation of the Moro National Liberation Front.

The sultan said he had received feelers from Misuari loyalists in Silangkan that they wanted to negotiate with the government for a possible laying down of their arms.

Government troops under 104th Brigade Commander Col. Romeo Tolentino succeeded in taking over the main Misuari camp in Silangkan late last month.

Relatives

This group, many of them relatives of Misuari, claimed that not all of them went along with Misuari's orders to attack police and military installations on Nov. 19.

Sultan Esmail said the Southcom welcomed this development but asked that it be provided with the names of the guerrillas who would surrender.

He also said while some in the group were willing to turn over their firearms, others were negotiating to keep their firearms in exchange for serving as members of local security forces in their areas.

The sultan also vehemently denied that he had anything to do with the arrest of Misuari by authorities in Malaysia where he fled after issuing orders to his followers to attack the military and police in a bid to stop the holding of regional elections on Nov. 26.

"There is absolutely no truth to these rumors. I have no right to ask any official or agency in Malaysia to arrest anybody from the Philippines who goes there," Sultan Esmail said, adding that Misuari was arrested for illegal entry, and "we should not add speculation to this."

MNLF origin

But for the first time, the sultan revealed the origins of the MNLF, confirming long-standing rumors on the forming of the erstwhile separatist movement.

"We (Misuari and himself) had a talk with Tun Mustafa Harun upon the discovery of the Jabidah training in Corregidor for the purpose of attacking Sabah. Harun proposed the formation of a counter-force composed of Muslim youths to repel the planned attack by the Marcos administration to take over the state of Sabah," he said.

Harun, then a high-ranking official in the state of Sabah, and head of the United Muslim Nationalist Organization (UMNO), hailed from Tawi-Tawi.

The heirs of the Sulu sultanate hold proprietary rights over that resource-rich state where about a half-million Filipinos mostly from Sulu and Tawi-Tawi reside, many of them illegal entrants.

But the sultan was quick to add that in fairness to the MNLF, he believed that "only Misuari knew about his agenda. The rest were made to believe that they were really fighting for independence, for the faith, to defend it against the Marcos dictatorship. That is why they joined."

Betrayal

This was the reason, he said, that top cadres of the organization left Misuari "one by one, when they realized his real objective. They felt betrayed."

Sultan Esmail made this disclosure in reaction to a statement of New York-based Misuari Counsel Elly Pamatong, who said in a TV interview that the Philippine government was persecuting Misuari to prevent him from taking Sabah ahead of the government, which has not dropped its claim for sovereignty rights over that eastern Malaysian state.

In that interview, Pamatong said the Philippine government was persecuting Misuari "because Misuari may get Sabah ahead of the government."

Pamatong's statement fueled speculations that Misuari actually went to Sabah to organize the predominantly Tausug expatriates there in a renewed bid to demand its separation from Malaysia.

A former top-ranking MNLF officer said the Jolo attack could have been ordered by Misuari "as a cover" for his escape to Malaysia, and to show that he still had a force to reckon with.

"Otherwise, why would he go there through the backdoor? As governor of the ARMM, he could just have gone to Malaysia with legal travel documents," the source said. "He could even have requested for asylum. And why Jampiras?"

Camps

The island of Jampiras, off the eastern shore of Sabah, was a former MNLF training camp. The other known camp where the first batches of *mujahideens* were trained was Pulao Pangkor.

Malaysian military trained the first groups known as the "top 90" and the "batch 300."

The same source also pointed out that Misuari's present force is now called "Mutallah."

"He knows he cannot use the name of the MNLF because we are not part of what he is doing now," he added.

Asked to comment on the government's claim that Misuari was involved in the kidnapping of 21 mostly foreign tourists from Sipadan in April 2000, Sultan Esmail said information he received seemed to confirm this. ***Noralyn Mustafa, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

LOOKING BACK

DENNIS SABANGAN

Whatever distracts this girl doesn't seem to bother other Muslim women who joined in prayers marking the end of Ramadan in Zamboanga City Sunday.

TEACHERS' PAY

Schools urge subsidy release

STA. CRUZ, Ilocos Sur—Private schools in the province are asking officials of the Department of Education Culture and Sports to immediately release their subsidy to pay for salaries of teachers this Christmas.

"We hope they would immediately release the subsidy to at least ensure a *tuyo* (dried fish) on our tables on Christmas eve," said Paulita Almazan, president of the Ilocos Sur Association of Private Schools (Isaps).

Almazan said the delay affects private schools not only in Ilocos Sur but also in other provinces.

Isaps is asking the national government to release their share of the Government Assistance for Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) to nine of the 18 private school grantees in the province.

The GASTPE, through the Educational Service Contracting (ESC) and the Tuition Fee Supplement (TFS), is given to students of private high schools whose tuition do not exceed P3,500 a year.

The Department of Education sets a quota for student grantees of the ESC who receive P2,500 subsidy each and for grantees of the TFS who receive a P500 subsidy each.

The amount goes to schools and teachers as the government's share in educating students in small private schools in the provinces.

Ilocos Sur private schools receive about P10 million in annual subsidy from the government.

Melchor Ines, chair of the board of trustees of the Sta. Catalina High School in Sta. Catalina town, said the programs have been the source of funds used to subsidize the school expenses of indigent families in the provinces.

He said the funds are used to augment the wages of teachers and to finance school improvement projects.

"We cannot let our student beneficiaries first shoulder the expenses because poverty is the first and foremost qualifications of the grantees," Almazan said.

The country's private schools began receiving the ESC-GASTPE funds in school year 1987-1988.

Isaps officials said the ESC funds would go to the general fund of a particular school. The TFS funds, on the other hand, would go to teachers' benefits (70 percent), school improvements (20 percent) and return of investments (10 percent).

"It is the lifeblood of our schools and any delay means so much to us, particularly the teachers," they said.

"Many of our teachers were forced to lend money and other means to cover up the long delay," Alex Mauricio, Isaps secretary, told the INQUIRER.

Mauricio said while teachers in public schools are paid no lower than P9,000, some private school teachers are still receiving as low as P2,000 monthly, way below the minimum wage. ***Leoncio Balbin Jr. and Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

'Ulang' to outclass 'sugpo' if BFAR would have its way

DAGUPAN CITY—As an alternative to *sugpo* or tiger prawn, whose production has dwindled through the years, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources is introducing the *ulang* or freshwater prawn (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*) to the market.

The BFAR's National Integrated Fisheries Development Center has developed the commercial production technology of prawn and is also field testing the species' inland production in the agency's research centers.

Westly Rosario, BFAR research center chief, said the Dagupan center has produced about a million *ulang* since it started operations last year. He said they distributed these to other centers and private pond operators.

The center maintains 3,000 freshwater prawn breeders.

Rosario said the government intends to forge a bilateral agreement with Myanmar, which has a good strain of the freshwater prawn species but has poor technology, on the hybridization of *ulang*.

Myanmar will provide the BFAR with a good strain of the freshwater prawn while the BFAR will transfer technology to that country.

During his visit to Myanmar last week, Rosario received from the Myanmar government some 200 stocks of juvenile freshwater prawns.

"However, because the prawns were not conditioned prior to the travel, only 60 stocks reached our center alive," he said.

He said through the stocks, the center would conduct a genetic study on the local and the imported species and come up with another strain through cross breeding.

"We will call the resulting breed Gem or genetically enhanced marcrobrachium," he said.

The center is comparing the performance of both species. But research agencies have conceded that the Myanmar strain is better than the local strain, he said.

"This way, we will be introducing different strains to farmers. We hope to prime up the market for *ulang*," Rosario said.

In Thailand, where the *ulang* is commercially produced, the freshwater prawn species have taken over tiger prawns in terms of demand, with first class restaurants serving only freshwater species.

Rosario said the *ulang* is expected to fill in the vacuum left by tiger prawns, which has been afflicted with the luminous bacterial disease, which gives white spots to the shell, and the non-luminous bacterial disease affecting its flesh.

He noted that the diseases do not affect human health but these have given *sugpo* a bad name and affected its market. *Sugpo* was a dominant export of the Philippines.

Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Mayor bans firecrackers in Davao

DAVAO CITY—Mayor Rodrigo Duterte said no one is exempted from his drive against firecrackers and pyrotechnics.

Duterte made the statement as he reacted to reports that he failed to act on the firecrackers displayed and sold at the newly opened SM City Davao, which had reportedly invested here due to his initiative.

"I instructed the police to arrest that (firecracker store) in SM the other day," he said.

In his weekly program Sunday morning over ABS-CBN Davao dubbed "Gikan sa Masa, Para sa Masa," Duterte said since he did not issue a single firecracker permit, the Davao City Police office should arrest every vendor selling firecrackers.

He said the move was to show that he was really serious in his campaign to save the eyesight, limbs and lives of people during the celebration of New Year.

The mayor added that he was not alone in his drive since he got a strong backing from the people during his consultation with various communities.

The city council recently passed a resolution banning the selling of firecrackers.

"I'm not doing this to popularize my drive as the first mayor to totally and absolutely ban (the) selling of firecrackers but my very concern here is public safety and security," Duterte said.

He said he will ask the police to strictly implement his order to arrest all those "hard-headed" traders who defy his order and continue to display and sell firecrackers.

"Those who are exploding firecrackers in public places will also be arrested," he added.

But the mayor said he could not do anything if individuals use firecrackers inside their homes.

Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau

ROUNDUP

Woman, daughter arrested

TACLOBAN CITY—The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Eastern Visayas arrested on Friday a woman and her 15-year-old daughter for allegedly possessing about 140 grams of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) worth P250,000. Evangeline Bohol and her daughter, both of Cebu City, were arrested during a buy-bust operation in Barangay Poblacion, Dulag town, about 50 kilometers from here. Packs of shabu were found inside Evangeline's black shoulder bag. The haul was considered the biggest seizure of illegal drugs this year. SPO4 Victor Ongsiako, who led the operation, said they got a tip that the two would be in Dulag to deliver shabu. "So we went there to conduct buy-bust operations," he said. The suspects were detained at the CIDG regional office based here. Evangeline admitted that the small packs of shabu were seized from her bag but she said a certain Carmen had asked her to deliver the "goods" to one Judith in Dulag. ***Joey Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Snake in judge's office

TACLOBAN CITY—A commotion erupted inside the Office of Judge Marino Buban of the Municipal Trial Court in Cities Branch 2 on Friday when a live snake was found inside one of the drawers in the judge's office. Court clerk Clint Asis found the brown snake when he opened the drawer. The snake, which had brown spots, was about 15 feet long. Buban immediately called the personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, who later poured kerosene on the snake. The snake died after 20 minutes. Buban said the snake could have come from a grassy lot at the back of their office. ***Cynthia Borgueta, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Prosecutor retires

CEBU CITY—Assistant Prosecutor I Cesar Tajanlangit will take over the helm of the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor starting Dec. 17. Tajanlangit will replace outgoing Provincial Prosecutor Rodolfo Go who has decided to avail of the early retirement. Go was supposed to retire on Oct. 18, 2002 when he turns 65, the mandatory age of retirement. But Go tendered his resignation effective Monday, saying an early retirement would do him good. "I am just happy to have reached the peak of my career," he said. Go has been provincial prosecutor since Sept. 24, 1998.

Debra Jane Magallon, PDI Visayas Bureau

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon and the Eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 22°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Hi 24° Lo 14°
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 28° Lo 19°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Hi 34° Lo 21°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 22°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Hi 29° Lo 19°
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 28° Lo 24°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 22°
Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 25°
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 23°
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 32° Lo 24°
Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy	Hi 35° Lo 23°
Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 25°
Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 31° Lo 23°
Davao	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 32° Lo 24°

Compiled by: Ray Leyesa, PDI Research/12/18/01

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News that makes a difference

Solon urges separation of villages from Clark

CAPAS, Tarlac—Preventing a "potential powder keg" among the Clark Development Corp., Department of National Defense and residents here, Tarlac Rep. Jesli Lapus sought the exclusion of seven western villages here from the Clark Special Economic Zone.

Lapus said the segregation of Barangays Aranguren, Lawy, Bueno, Maruglo, Patling, Sta. Lucia and Sta. Juliana from the Clark sub-zone would help allay fears of displacement by residents.

The villages have an area of at least 28,455 hectares.

The sub-zone, which covers 70 percent of Capas, used to be a military reservation of the United States 13th Air Force in Clark Air Base from 1902 to 1991.

The Philippine government, following the closure of Clark in 1991, reserved the area for agro-industrial investments through a congressional order.

"Those have been legitimate barangays for the past 50 years. Those are densely populated, complete with home lots, farm lots, schools and other . . . infrastructure," Lapus said.

The residents got titles to the lands, which Aetas also consider an ancestral domain.

American military authorities tolerated the agricultural activities of upland farmers and indigenous tribesmen in the area, Lapus said.

According to him, the segregation must be immediately made because the Bases Conversion Development Authority, the body that oversees the conversion of Clark in Pampanga and Subic in Zambales, had apportioned 10,000 hectares at the sub-zone for the DND.

Lapus said the exact location of the DND site is unclear at this point, making it more necessary to delineate the boundaries of the seven barangays.

Active investment promotions at the sub-zone have also created anxiety among local folk, it was learned.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, on the request of Lapus, has completed the perimeter survey of the seven villages.

If Congress approves the segregation, he said the local government would begin land titling and agrarian reform in the villages.

If separated, the land area of Clark, which measures some 44,000 hectares, will be sharply reduced to less than 16,000 hectares. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Clark to host air talks

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—All air negotiations between the Philippines and other countries will be held in Clark beginning next year, Clark Development Corp. officials announced on Friday.

Clark's hosting of the air talks was approved by Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez after President Macapagal-Arroyo issued last November an executive order directing the inclusion of the CDC in the Philippine air talks panel.

Jose Victor Luciano, CDC executive vice president, said the choice of Clark as a venue for all the country's air talks is a "good marketing tool" in making the airport, renamed the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport, as a major flight destination.

"It's having a foot in the door," Luciano told reporters here.

Marketing

No similar marketing thrust was undertaken during the last nine years that the Clark airport was converted from an American military facility into a civilian asset, he said.

"Legislation is not enough to promote the DMIA. It can be fast-tracked by hosting the air talks," he added.

The Clark airport remained largely idle especially during the Estrada administration. Its development was hampered by debates on the exclusivity provisions of the Philippine International Air Terminals International Co. contract for a passenger terminal at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The conferences, which discuss reciprocity in landing rights, will begin with Brunei and China, according to Luciano.

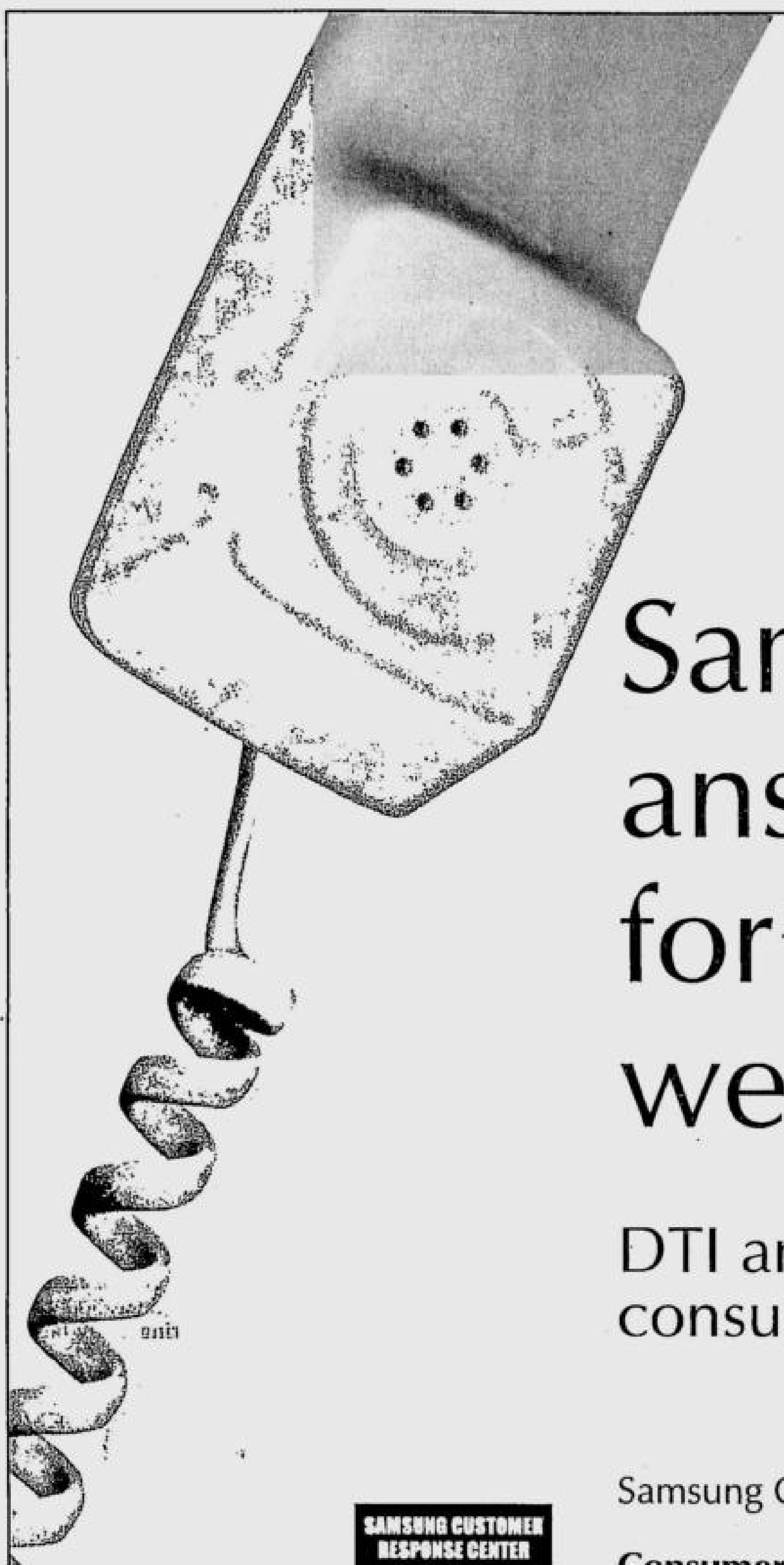
Recent talks with Korea and the Macau Special Administrative Region in China have yielded positive results. The flag carriers of these two regions have made the DMIA as a new point of destination.

Advantages

In the talks, the advantages of the DMIA in terms of security and available facilities are emphasized, Luciano said.

Before the President's order, the air talks panel used to be comprised of the Department of Transportation and Communications, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Tourism, the Civil Aeronautics Board and airline companies.

Also upon the directive of the President, the CDC is scheduled to buy a P500-million radar through a 20-year loan package, Bienvenido Manga, DMIA general manager said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



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Gloria gags Cabinet on Kirin-SMC deal

EDWIN BACASMAS

COJUANGCO brings his "business acumen" to the Palace when he met with the President last October.

(From page A1)

ings that the Kirin deal would dilute the value of government shares in SMC.

"The Cabinet meeting should be an interesting one since I think there would be differing views on the Kirin deal and Mr. Cojuangco's chairmanship in San Miguel," Tiglao said.

Tiglao said Ms Macapagal wanted to "get differing opinions" and come up with a "consensus on the government stand."

Asked whether the government would come up with a definitive position after today's Cabinet meeting, Tiglao said: "Hopefully."

Camacho as referee

The President disclosed that "Lito (Camacho) will put PCGG and Kirin together. Why? Because PCGG will look at it only from the legal point of view.

"It is not just a matter of litigation. It's a major investment," Ms Macapagal said of the $540-million deal.

But as far as the President was concerned, Tiglao said the Kirin deal "would go a long way in sending a signal to the world that we are stabilizing and a good area for investments."

Tiglao said that what the President was "emphasizing is that the Kirin deal will be a shot in the arm of our economy."

He said the price quoted for the deal would relieve the problem of investor confidence, which has been plaguing the country since the start of the year.

Japanese investors are conservative and Kirin, in particular, is "a very conservative company," Tiglao said.

Tiglao said the President decided to discuss before the entire Cabinet the Kirin deal and Cojuangco's chairmanship at SMC because "we want a consensus on a very sensitive issue."

"Mr. Cojuangco figured in the Marcos days and there are groups who are readily against him. But there are also quarters in the business sector who admire his business acumen and the way he is running SMC," Tiglao said.

Even government representatives for the two SMC board seats held by the Social Security System (SSS) and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) have no particular complaints on how Cojuangco is running SMC, according to Tiglao.

He declined to answer categorically if Ms Macapagal herself was satisfied with Cojuangco's management.

"It's not up to the President to evaluate Mr. Cojuangco's performance," Tiglao said.

The President said over the weekend that she had no plans to replace Cojuangco despite a Supreme Court ruling, which virtually gave the government control over SMC. *(See related story)*

Tiglao again defended Ms Macapagal's statement.

Cojuangco is the single biggest stockholder and therefore has "the first say in nominating a chair" for the company, according to the presidential spokesperson.

Kid glove treatment

The People's Consultative Assembly (PCA) took the President to task for her reluctance to oust Cojuangco as SMC chair.

PCA head Linda Montayre said the President's apparent "kid glove" treatment of Cojuangco confirmed her group's claim that the President would get P20 billion from the failed compromise settlement of 27 percent of SMC, which was brokered by Dante Ang, the President's private publicist.

The 27-percent stake in San Miguel was bought using the coco levy collected from coconut farmers from 1973 to 1982. The funds, part of the P130 billion in coco levy funds, are under litigation.

"Her actions show that money may have changed hands already," Montayre said in Filipino.

The PCA counts among its supporters major farming groups, including the Coconut Industry Reform (COIR) Movement Inc.

In November, Montayre said that her group had learned about negotiations for the President to get P20 billion from the proposed compromise agreement, which was signed by Cocofed's Maria Clara Lobregat and some farmers' groups on Oct. 28.

Montayre said PCA got the information from a ranking government official, who took part in earlier negotiations between Palace officials and Cojuangco.

She said the President needed the money for the 2004 presidential elections. The deal also allegedly involves the President moving over to Danding's Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC).

"The President's plan to transfer to the NPC was aborted when we came out with our story," she added.

Five seats

On the five SMC board seats representing the sequestered 27-percent stake in San Miguel, Tiglao said the government might have to wait for the stockholders' meeting in February to boot them out. The five were nominees of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The President said she was leaving it up to the PCGG how to replace the five nominees.

"My concern is the strategic direction. We have to combine our good investment climate for a big investment of Kirin and the opportunity that we can grab to have relief for the farmers," Ms Macapagal said.

Besides the five seats controlled by the government, the GSIS and the SSS have two board seats.

The GSIS and the SSS have a combined 11-percent interest in the food and beverage company.

Sen. Joker Arroyo, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, said the seven government representatives in the SMC board could be held liable for violating the public's trust when they failed to inform the government of the deal with Kirin.

Arroyo said the board members acted "as if the deal was theirs to decide alone without consulting their principal—the government."

The sale of 15 percent of the food and beverage giant gave Cojuangco control of 35 percent of the company without spending a single centavo, according to Arroyo.

"The underlying issue is control. Why did the seven government directors agree to that disadvantageous arrangement that will strengthen Cojuangco's hold of the company *gratis*," Arroyo said.

Among the directors being alluded to by Arroyo are Estrada nominees Raul De Guzman, Benjamin Paulino, Espiridion Laxa, Hermogenes Tantoco and Allan Lee.

Arroyo said the government was still disputing the 20-percent stake in SMC, which Cojuangco is claiming.

While the issue is still pending in court, Cojuangco has been voting the 20 percent, according to Arroyo.

"The government votes for the 27-percent sequestered coco levy shares in SMC and for the 11-percent SSS-GSIS stake for a total of 38 percent. Yet, Cojuangco, with only 20 percent, which the government even contests, has been running the SMC as if it were his own fiefdom," Arroyo said.

"That is the start of the unfolding story of the betrayal of the public trust in San Miguel Corp. The coconut farmers, whose identities are not even known have been used first as pawns in the fight for ownership, and now for control," he said. ***With reports from Armand N. Nocum and Norman Bordadora***

Palace team to decide how to spend ₱130B

(From page A1)

reason the Senate was conducting an inquiry into the coco levy funds.

"Since the sectors concerned anticipated the Supreme Court to take some time before it could decide on the matter, Congress was asked to declare the funds public," Arroyo said.

Enrile's view was echoed by other guests at the breakfast forum—Danilo Coronacion, the administrator of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and Jesus Arranza, president of the Philippine Coconut Millers' Association (Cocofed).

The coco levy, collected from 1973 to 1982, was used to acquire the United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB), six oil mills and 47 percent of San Miguel Corp., according to the government. The funds have not benefited small coconut farmers and workers as these are under litigation before the Sandiganbayan and the Supreme Court.

Enrile, Coronacion and Arranza said not the whole of UCPB was acquired using coco funds. They said private individuals had bought a small stake in the bank.

SMC chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. and his associates at the Cocofed claim that the levy is a private fund, but the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) insists that the funds are public in character.

"From the beginning, the Supreme Court has been saying that until private parties demonstrate that the fund had become legitimately private, then it will continue to be a public fund and subject to sequestration," PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac said over station dzMM.

Yorac was invited to the Kapihan yesterday but failed to attend the forum.

Palace team

The team Malacañang is forming may include Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Finance Secretary Jose Camacho and a representative from the PCA, an agency recently transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the Office of the President, according to presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao.

Tiglao said the composition of the team would be determined in today's Cabinet meeting.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo "will ask the team to map out a plan so that when the Sandiganbayan rules in six months, the funds will be immediately mobilized for coconut farmers and workers."

Malacañang expects the Sandiganbayan to affirm the levy as a public fund following the recent Supreme Court ruling, according to Tiglao.

The Supreme Court has given the Sandiganbayan six months to come up with a definitive ruling on the character of the levy. The anti-graft court is handling eight cases related to the coco levy funds.

In issuing the ruling, the Supreme Court upheld the right of the PCGG to exercise its right to vote the sequestered shares of UCPB.

The UCPB controls 14 holding companies, which hold a 27-percent stake in SMC. The block of shares is estimated to be worth between P40 billion and 50 billion.

Tiglao said the other day that the high tribunal's ruling had rendered moot options for a compromise agreement on the 27-percent stake in the food and beverage company.

A group of coconut farmers and Cocofed signed a proposed compromise agreement on Oct. 28 creating a trust fund from the proceeds of the sale of the 27-percent stake in SMC. Under the deal, interest earnings from the trust funds are to be used by the farmers, Cocofed and the government.

Thai whiz develops 'cyber katol'

(From page A1)

When a mosquito flies into a zone where low-frequency sounds in the 15-20 kilohertz range are being emitted, a sort of "turbulence" is created that makes it difficult for them to fly, the report said.

Messages posted on the thaiware.com bulletin board generally gave good reviews of the program, but some users said it caused headaches, particularly at the lower 15 kHz level.

"I can tell that there are fewer mosquitoes around, but the program should be developed so that it has fewer side effects on human beings and the environment," one review said.

"My dog was lying by the computer and it suddenly began staring at the speakers when I launched the program."

Problems with headaches seemed to decrease at the 20 kHz level.

No adverse effect

Saranyou insists that the program has no adverse effect on humans, although he admits it may bother animals because they can hear lower frequencies.

"I first tested it in a friend's home that had lots of mosquitoes, and they were eventually all driven away," Saranyou told The Nation.

But he said mosquitoes knew how to adapt to the low-frequency sound, which might render the program ineffective later on.

The effectiveness of the program also depended on the sex of the mosquitoes and their species.

Saranyou says his program is supported by a University of Kentucky study on mosquito flight. He drew inspiration from a similar program used on the Palm handheld organizer designed to drive away dogs.

"Dogs probably won't chase after you every day. Mosquitoes do," he said.

Saranyou, a programmer in his late 20s, said the application's sole purpose was not just to drive away mosquitoes.

Starting a wave

"I created it so that I could start a wave where programmers would (be inspired to) embark on new innovations."

By creating unique programs suited for local use utilizing available items, in this case the computer's built-in speakers, he hopes to inspire other programmers to follow suit.

Updates to the program are under development, including another anti-mosquito program using different frequency levels and based on another scientific study.

Saranyou also plans to make an anti-fly program.

Saranyou, however, said he could not help one person who posted a request on Thaiware.com's message board.

The writer was asking for an anti-wife program. ***Reports from AFP, The Nation/Asia News Network***

US flag raised in Kabul embassy

(From page A1)

The US Embassy is one of the many long-abandoned diplomatic outposts in the capital that are being rushed into service before Afghanistan's interim government is inaugurated on Saturday.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem also flew to Kabul and reopened his country's embassy. Other countries, including the United Kingdom and Italy, already have reopened their embassies in the capital.

Dobbins said the flag ceremony showed America was committed to being "diplomatically, politically and economically engaged in Afghanistan."

Direct US military involvement, however, appeared to be drawing to a close.

Mountain chase

Afghan tribal fighters and US special forces chased al-Qaida guerrillas through the mountains of eastern Afghanistan on Monday after conquering their complex of caves and tunnels in Tora Bora.

Some tearful al-Qaida fighters surrendered but pleaded with their captors not to turn them over to the Americans.

More than 200 foreigners from the al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, were killed in battles culminating nine weeks of attacks by American warplanes in the air and eastern alliance forces on the ground.

Hundreds more were believed to be on the run, but there was no word on the whereabouts of Bin Laden who was earlier reported to be in the area.

US MARINES set up prisoner of war camp at the international airport at the Kandahar International Airport on Sunday.

GETTY IMAGES

US air strikes were less intense Monday than in the previous weeks, but bombs still exploded deep in the forests on the snowcapped mountain range where al-Qaida fighters were believed to be fleeing.

Cannon fire from helicopter gunships gave an orange tint to low-lying clouds over the mountains.

Eastern alliance fighters said misdirected US bombs killed three of their fighters overnight, repeating charges leveled earlier in the fighting that the Americans weren't taking enough care to avoid hitting their allies.

But some alliance fighters said US special forces were working with them as they searched the caves and tunnels left behind by fleeing al-Qaida troops.

Auzubillah, a commander of the tribal eastern alliance, said his forces clashed early Monday with retreating al-Qaida fighters, killing two and capturing five. He reported finding ammunition and food stores in abandoned caves.

Several local fighters said women and children were among those killed in the battles, adding credence to reports that some al-Qaida foreign fighters had brought their wives and children into the mountains with them.

Captured al-Qaida members were led down the mountainside on mules amid intermittent snow. Many were crying.

Parade

One local faction paraded 18 men, including nine Arabs, through the streets of a village. Several appeared to be slightly injured, and one man's head was bandaged.

Some had their hands tied behind their backs with red nylon ropes. They were not allowed to speak to reporters.

About 200 residents watched silently, standing outside a village mosque.

"When they were fighting us they were very proud men," a 23-year-old villager said, cradling a Kalashnikov rifle. "Now they are weak. They cannot even look at us."

Thirteen captured fighters, four of them seriously wounded, were being held in the mountains.

In footage taken by Associated Press Television News, the captors said the group included two senior al-Qaida commanders, whose names weren't given.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld also said Sunday during a visit to Afghanistan that one senior al-Qaida leader had reportedly been captured, but he did not identify him.

The men pleaded with their captors not to turn them over to US forces. Khudaifa, a 17-year-old fighter from Kuwait, came with his father to fight with al-Qaida. But he said an American bomb killed his father and wounded him.

"I haven't had a drink for two days. If you don't give me water I will die," Khudaifa begged.

"You've been injured. If you drink too much, you will die," his unidentified captor responded.

"I don't care," the teenager said.

The prisoners said they knew of 64 more al-Qaida fighters hiding in the forest. They said they had seen Bin Laden in the area a month ago, but weren't sure where he was now.

It was unclear what would happen to the captured al-Qaida. Commanders spoke alternately of handing them over to US authorities or of letting Afghanistan's interim government deal with them.

US Marines in southern Afghanistan have built a prisoner-of-war facility able to hold 300 people.

Last pocket

The area around Tora Bora was the last major pocket of al-Qaida resistance in Afghanistan.

The eastern alliance—a collection of fighters under tribal leaders in Afghanistan's east—said Sunday that it had captured the foreign fighters' defensive positions and fighters chanted in English, "Al-Qaida is finished! Al-Qaida is finished!"

But Gen. Tommy Franks, the war's commander, said events on the ground made clear that fighting was far from over.

"It's going to be a while before we have the area of Tora Bora fully under control," Franks said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

In southern Afghanistan, a Marine who stepped on a land mine at Kandahar's airport was flown to a hospital outside Afghanistan.

Cpl. Chris Chandler lost his foot in the accident. Two other Marines—Sgt. Adrian Aranda and Lance Cpl. Nicholas Sovereign—suffered minor injuries to their hands and arms.

At the airport, the Marines' new base, Marines set up tents and equipment under an early morning rainbow. The rain overnight was unusual for the parched region.

C-130 transport planes arrived with 13 loads of reinforcements.

David Hicks, a 26-year-old Australian captured while fighting with the Taliban, was also handed over to US forces and flown Monday to an American ship in the region, the Australian government said. It was unclear what his fate might be.

Karzai

Afghanistan's interim leader, Hamid Karzai, was flying Monday to Rome, where he planned to meet with Afghanistan's exiled king, Mohammad Zaher Shah, according to Shah's son, Prince Mirwais Zaher.

The prince, speaking in Rome at a meal to break the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, said the holiday this year "was even more special because I'll be going back to Afghanistan soon. We're all going back to Afghanistan and that is a reason to celebrate."

Shut up, film director tells whining Estradas

(From page A1)

Estradas' health perks with the physical and psychological maltreatment he and other political prisoners endured during Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship.

"Come down to earth, you two, and shut up!" Cervantes snarled at a press forum yesterday, a day after the deposed President, with the full blessing of the court, underwent surgery for the removal of a cataract at the Asian Eye Institute (AEI) at the upscale Rockwell Center in Makati City.

But just over an hour after the midday forum, Estrada was again granted permission to be escorted back to the AEI for a post-operative checkup, according to Sandiganbayan sheriff Ed Urieta.

Estrada left the Veterans Memorial Medical Center for the AEI shortly after 1 p.m. and was examined there for about 20 minutes, Urieta said. The ex-president and his convoy were back at the hospital around 2:15 p.m.

Doctors have scheduled Estrada's subsequent eye checkups on Dec. 19, 21 and 23.

Cervantes said he was arrested four times and incarcerated three times.

"Many of my co-detainees suffered illnesses, and at no one time were they given any kind of medical attention (such as what the Estradas) are demanding," Cervantes said, adding:

"If you go through the injustice of incarceration and you find out that this father-and-son tandem is having some of the best treatment people can have, (you'll think that) they might as well be in (the world-famous beach of) Boracay, for heaven's sake!"

Erap's knee

In a statement, Plunderwatch reiterated its strong objection to allowing Estrada to fly to the United States for knee surgery, insisting that Philippine hospitals and doctors had the technology and expertise for such procedure.

It also called for an "independent" medical team to check on the supposed heart condition of Jinggoy, who was taken two weeks ago to the Makati Medical Center for chest pains and upon the decision of his family doctor.

Estrada lawyers have cited Jinggoy's health in requesting the court to put him under house arrest.

Detained since April on charges of economic plunder, the Estradas share a tightly guarded suite at the state-run VMMC in Quezon City.

Their lawyer Rene Saguisag had asked that they be allowed to spend the Christmas and New Year holidays at the family residence in San Juan, but the court denied the request.

Jinggoy's bail

For the nth time, Jinggoy has asked the Supreme Court to allow him to post bail.

The ex-mayor of San Juan said in a supplemental motion filed last week that the allegation that he pocketed P15 million out of the tobacco excise taxes was "pure hearsay."

He also reminded the tribunal of the pending motion to resolve his plea for provisional liberty.

Jose de Jesus Jr., spokesperson of the Office of the Ombudsman, said yesterday that the prosecution panel would "vehemently oppose" Jinggoy's latest stab at temporary freedom.

"He is being charged with plunder, a capital offense that is non-bailable," De Jesus pointed out. "He argues that the evidence is weak, so he can be allowed to post bail. But that is not the case. The Ombudsman has enough solid evidence to secure his conviction."

De Jesus also said Jinggoy's motion was rendered moot by the tribunal's Nov. 19 decision upholding the constitutionality of the plunder law.

Associate Justice Josue Bellosillo, who wrote the high court's decision on the plunder law, earlier told reporters that it would be up to the Sandiganbayan to rule on whether the Estradas could be granted provisional liberty.

"But they are charged with plunder, a non-bailable offense," Bellosillo noted.

Jinggoy was charged with conspiring with his father "in amassing and acquiring through ill-gotten wealth 'from illegal gambling' through any or a combination or a series of overt or criminal acts or similar schemes or means."

Jueteng

But Jinggoy's lawyers argued in the six-page supplemental motion that the only accusation against him was "premised on pure, unadulterated and inadmissible hearsay at that."

The lawyers contended that Jinggoy's participation was limited to giving Emma Lim, an employee of 'Juetengate' whistleblower Luis "Chavit" Singson, P1 million twice from January to February 2000.

The money allegedly came from jueteng collections.

"As to the excise tax, on the basis of pure hearsay, and in connection with which petitioner was not named in the information, P15 million supposedly went to him (Jinggoy)," the lawyers said.

"Aside from being hearsay, this assertion has absolutely no plunder evidentiary value at all as to petitioner as he is not mentioned or alluded to at all anywhere in regard to the Belle, GSIS (Government Service Insurance System), SSS (Social Security System), and the (Jose) Velarde accounts."

"As a matter of fact, petitioner is on the dock only for jueteng; as a matter of conclusion of law, he is charged with conspiracy, without the supporting averments of ultimate facts on how he could be complicit, for there could be none," the lawyers said. *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*

Same low fares for the holidays!

ORIGIN: MANILA

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
CEBU	5J - 557	Daily	0130	0240	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 559	Daily	0500	0610		
	5J - 561	Daily	0700	0810		
	5J - 563	Daily	0900	1010		
	5J - 565	Daily	1100	1210		
	5J - 567	Daily	1300	1410		
	5J - 569	Daily	1500	1610		
	5J - 571	Daily	1700	1810		
	5J - 573	Daily	1900	2010		
DAVAO	5J - 961	Daily	0430	0610	P3,307	P2,919
	5J - 963	Daily	1010	1150		
	5J - 965	Daily	1210	1350		
	5J - 967	Daily	1500	1640		
	5J - 969	Daily	1700	1840		
CAGAYAN de ORO	5J - 381	Daily	0510	0635	P3,295	P2,919
	5J - 383	Daily	0930	1055		
	5J - 385	Daily	1325	1450		
TACLOBAN	5J - 651	Daily	0610	0720	P2,718	P2,419
	5J - 655	Daily	1210	1320		
	5J - 657	Daily	1400	1510		
ILOILO	5J - 451	Daily	0505	0605	P2,498	P2,199
	5J - 455	Daily	0955	1055		
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only.	5J - 457*	M/W/F/Sun	1310	1410		
	5J - 459	Daily	1600	1700		
BACOLOD	5J - 473	M/W/F/Sun	0510	0610	P2,498	P2,199
	5J - 473	Tu/Th/Sat	0620	0720		
	5J - 475	Daily	1000	1100		
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only.	5J - 477*	Tu/Th/Sat	1310	1410		
	5J - 479	Daily	1640	1740		
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 851	Daily	0520	0650	P3,295	P2,639
ROXAS	5J - 373	Daily	0530	0630	P2,279	P1,979
DUMAGUETE	5J - 627	Daily	1340	1450	P2,608	P2,309
KALIBO	5J - 339	Daily	0900	0950	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 341*	Daily	1330	1420		

*Operational from 21 Dec 2001 to 06 Jan 2002 only.

ORIGIN: CEBU

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 558	Daily	0400	0510	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 560	Daily	0700	0810		
	5J - 562	Daily	0900	1010		
	5J - 564	Daily	1100	1210		
	5J - 566	Daily	1300	1410		
	5J - 568	Daily	1500	1610		
	5J - 570	Daily	1700	1810		
	5J - 572	Daily	1900	2010		
	5J - 574	Daily	2100	2210		
DAVAO	5J - 593	Daily	0800	0850	P2,339	P2,039
	5J - 597	Daily	1450	1540		
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 431	W/Th/Sat	0905	1000	P2,388	P2,089
ILOILO	5J - 164	Daily	1750	1825	P1,799	P1,599
BACOLOD	5J - 126	M/W/F/Sun	0810	0840	P1,599	P1,399
CLARK	5J - 588	M/W/F/Sun	1050	1210	P2,995	P2,669

ORIGIN: DAVAO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 962	Daily	0720	0900	P3,307	P2,919
	5J - 964	Daily	1230	1410		
	5J - 966	Daily	1430	1610		
	5J - 968	Daily	1720	1900		
	5J - 970	Daily	1920	2100		
CEBU	5J - 594	Daily	0930	1020	P2,339	P2,039
	5J - 598	Daily	1620	1710		
ILOILO *via Cebu	5J - 598/164*	Daily	1620	1825	P3,295	P2,839
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 393	Tu/F/Sun	0910	1010	P2,388	P2,089

ORIGIN: CLARK

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
CEBU	5J - 589	M/W/F/Sun	1300	1420	P2,995	P2,669

ORIGIN: CAGAYAN DE ORO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 382	Daily	0715	0840	P3,295	P2,919
	5J - 384	Daily	1135	1300		
	5J - 386	Daily	1530	1655		

ORIGIN: TACLOBAN

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 652	Daily	0800	0910	P2,718	P2,419
	5J - 656	Daily	1400	1510		
	5J - 658	Daily	1550	1700		

ORIGIN: ILOILO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 456	Daily	1135	1235	P2,498	P2,199
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only.	5J - 458*	M/W/F/Sun	1450	1550		
	5J - 460	Daily	1740	1840		
	5J - 462	Daily	1905	2005		
CEBU	5J - 161	Daily	0645	0720	P1,799	P1,599
DAVAO *via Cebu	5J - 161/593*	Daily	0645	0850	P3,295	P2,839

ORIGIN: BACOLOD

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 474	M/W/F/Sun	0930	1030	P2,498	P2,199
	5J - 474	Tu/Th/Sat	0810	0910		
	5J - 476	Daily	1150	1250		
*Operational from 14-23 December 2001 only.	5J - 478*	Tu/Th/Sat	1450	1600		
	5J - 480	Daily	1830	1930		
CEBU	5J - 125	M/W/F/Sun	0700	0730	P1,599	P1,399

ORIGIN: ZAMBOANGA

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 852	Mon	0730	0900	P3,295	P2,639
	5J - 852	Tu-Sun	1050	1220		
CEBU	5J - 432	W/Th/Sat	0730	0825	P2,388	P2,089
DAVAO	5J - 394	Tu/F/Sun	0730	0830	P2,388	P2,089

ORIGIN: ROXAS

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 374	Daily	0710	0810	P2,279	P1,979

ORIGIN: DUMAGUETE

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 628	Daily	1530	1640	P2,608	P2,309

ORIGIN: KALIBO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES	
					NORMAL	VALUE
MANILA	5J - 340	Daily	1030	1120	P2,608	P2,309
	5J - 342*	Daily	1500	1550		

*Operational from 21 Dec 2001 to 06 Jan 2002 only.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

FROM - TO		FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA
MANILA -	HONGKONG	5J - 112	Daily	0850	1050
		5J - 118	Daily	1640	1840
HONG KONG -	MANILA	5J - 113	Daily	1150	1350
		5J - 119	Daily	1940	2140

NOTES:
- *All fares are subject to government approval and are exclusive of government tax.*
- *Child's fare and other regular discounts are applicable to Normal Fares only.*
- *Insurance surcharge of P300 per sector is applicable to all fare types.*
- *All fares and schedules are effective 14 December 2001.*
- *All fares and schedules are subject to change without prior notice.*

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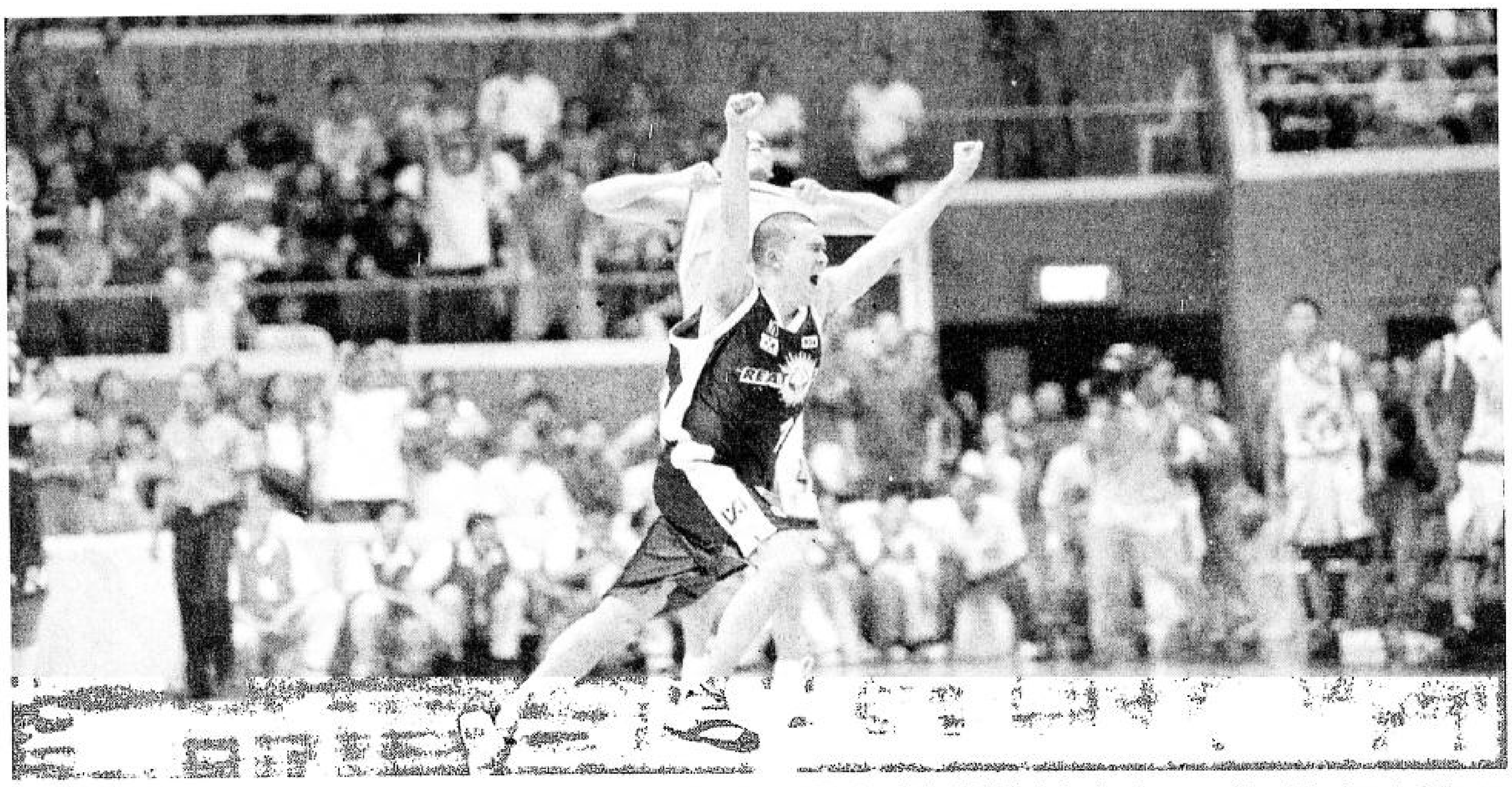


A EUPHORIC Chris Tan races to his teammates after the final buzzer ending Game 6 Sunday of the PBA Finals for the Governors Cup at the Araneta Coliseum. Tan fired the triple that gave Sta. Lucia Realty a title-clinching 75-72 victory over San Miguel Beer with three seconds remaining. Notice SMB's Danny Seigle about to remove his jersey after missing the tying shot.
ROMY HOMILLADA

Jong: Bye SMB

By June Navarro

UICHICO

A DAY after San Miguel Beer lost the PBA Governors Cup title to Sta. Lucia Realty, head coach Jong Uichico announced he would take a leave of absence next year.

Uichico, however, won't pack his things because he got frustrated with the way the Beermen fared in the last two conferences but rather he will start imparting his skills to the PBA-backed national team to the Asian Games.

Uichico, who was picked as one of national coach Ron Jacobs' associates, said he would leave the coaching chores to Art Dela Cruz and Siot Tangquincen, his assistants in San Miguel.

"But as to who will be designated as head coach, the management has yet to discuss the issue," said Uichico after yielding to the Realtors, 75-72, in Game 6 of their best-of-seven Finals Friday night.

Chris Tan shot the winning triple for Sta. Lucia in the last three seconds of the game.

With at least three Beermen—Danny Seigle, Danny Ildefonso and Olsen Racela—trying out for the national team, San Miguel management will have to fill the void left by Uichico with a popular choice.

Dorian Pena and Dondon Hontiveros, who was earlier shipped to San Miguel in exchange for defensive specialist Freddie Abuda, have also shown interest in donning the national colors in the Busan, South Korea meet.

"These players will leave a big space so I guess we'll talk things over on how to re-organize the team," said Uichico.

Uichico, who played for Jacobs in the Asian Youth championships in 1982, had won five of his seven Finals' appearances in only three seasons with San Miguel Beer.

He had a chance to capture his sixth coaching title against Sta. Lucia but luck swayed against the Beermen this time around.

"It's impossible to win every single championship but at least we won the All-Filipino title this year," said Uichico, who won the four titles in 1999 and 2000 PBA seasons except for the All-Filipino plum.

Stepson also rises

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE SHOT recalled that dramatic basket by Rudy Distrito some years back.

Distrito's hit the marker when all seemed lost for Ginebra San Miguel; it completed Ginebra's rise from the grave as the Gins overcame a 1-3 deficit to defeat Shell, 4-3, for the 1991 PBA Governors Cup. That title-clinching game now ranks as one of the all-time classics in PBA lore.

And then, history sort of repeated itself on Sunday.

With three ticks left, Chris Tan, one of the league's least known shooters from afar, flicked a three-pointer from left quarter court. The shot came after an inbound pass by Paolo Mendoza underneath enemy basket.

"The play was designed for Damien (Owens)," said Sta. Lucia coach Norman Black. "But then, Chris also had instructions to shoot should Damien gets bottled up."

San Miguel Beer collapsed its defenses on Owens right after Mendoza had inbounded, leaving Tan free from some 26 feet away. Without hesitation, Tan fired, his toes a good one meter away from the arc.

It hit nothing but net.

It sparked joy of euphoric proportions for Sta. Lucia Realty, whose bench erupted riotously when Danny Seigle's game-tying triple spun out after it hit the back rim.

Final score: 75-72. Finals outcome: 4-2 for Sta. Lucia.

Whoever said the league's big thrill is dead must be nuts. Hey, the PBA will always be known as the well of swells. Swell games. Swell thrills. Swell players.

Chris Tan is not exactly your kind of guy who can sink his teeth into championship trophy. But don't tell that to Norman Black, he of the league's third Grand Slam (SMB) author in 1989. Black knows Tan from the day he took him like his own son when Chris was six. It takes one to know one. Norman and Cris go a long way insofar as bonding is concerned. Chris is Norman's stepson.

SPORTS ON TV

Compiled by Lorenzo Manguiat

BOXING: WBA Heavyweight Championship - Evander Holyfield vs John Ruiz at 10:30 p.m. (r) on RPN 9

GOLF: PGA Compaq Classic of New Orleans, Second Round at 2 p.m. on Star Sports

President's Cup 2000, Day Three at 11 p.m. on Star Sports

BASKETBALL: US NCAA—Iowa vs Missouri at 8 a.m. (r) on ESPN

TENNIS: Best of US Open 2001 at 9 p.m. on Star Sports

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1991, Warren Kiamco beat Eduardo 'Pikoy' Villanueva, 8-3, to rule the grand final eliminations of the Gold Eagle Beer Billiards Classic in Cebu. Also today in 1995, Jesus Guce steered Strong Material to a winning time of 2:14 to capture the 23rd Presidential Gold Cup race at Sta. Ana.

25 teams join Students cagefest

AT LEAST 25 school teams have confirmed participation in the NCR elimination for the 56th National Students Basketball Championships.

Basketball Association of the Philippines secretary general Graham Lim and various school representatives met last week to thresh out the details of the month-long qualifying to be held at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum starting Jan. 7 next year.

Among the confirmed teams are the University of the East, Jose Rizal University, San Sebastian College, St. Francis of Assisi College, Letran College, Perpetual Help University of Rizal, Lyceum of the Philippines and Adamson University.

Lim said other teams are also expected to join the quest for two NCR slots for the finals of the oldest and only true national competition also known as the National Inter-Collegiate and National Inter-Secondary Championships.

The final meeting will be held at 3 p.m. today at the Basketball Referees Commission (Barecom) office inside the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

"As the BAP events have already been programmed for year 2002, one of our top priorities is the Students Championships and we will make sure that this will be one of the best staged events," said Lim.

Lim said the NCR elimination will be supported by the National Basketball League headed by president Christian Tan and commissioner Francis "Fritz" Gaston.

"The BAP has appointed the NBL to support the elimination round for NCR because it has already proven its capability to handle a tournament. The BAP has worked with the NBL in various competitions in the past and they all bore good results," said Lim.

Jungolf tourney Dec. 21

THE ANNUAL anniversary tournament and Christmas party of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines will be held this Friday, Dec. 21, at the exclusive Riviera Golf and Country Club in Silang, Cavite.

Merwin Mediana, president of Jungolf, announced that jungolfers, parents and alumni will play in the tourney which caps the year round activities of the association.

Players in the Classes A, B and C, parents and alumni will play at the Langer course of Riviera while those in Class D and E will be at the executive course of the club.

More than P100,000 worth of giveaways and raffle items has been put up for the event which has also drawn the support of Adidas-Taylor Made.

Rey tops bassfest

REY Buencamino took his second Angler of the Year crown at the conclusion of the Philippine Game Fishing Foundation series recently at the Lake Caliraya bassfest.

Buencamino, the PGFF president, first emerged AOY in 1990. He did better this year, also snaring the Heavy Tackle AOY plum.

Boy Co, American Technologies Inc. president, and teammate Edwin Guzman of the BIR shared honors by ruling the 12th and final leg of the AOY series with a 25-bass catch.

Romy Herman and Mon Sicat placed second while Edmund Lim and Gilberto Medios ended up third, edging Jimmy Flores and Tony Barrios. Barrios, however, hooked the largest bass among more than 150 bass caught.

Benedict Lim won as Light Tackle AOY while Bert Lingayo clinched runner-up honors for the sixth straight year.

The PGFF awarding ceremonies to be hosted by Edwin Fernandez will be on Dec. 18 at Saisaki-Edsa in Mandaluyong City.

For details, call Rose Aberin at 373-0743/373-0248 or visit www.pgff.com.ph or E-mail: pgffrose@edsamail.com.ph.

Splendido Taal course now playable

SPLENDIDO Taal, an 18-hole, 7,016-yard, par 72 championship golf course carved out from a 70-hectare area in a valley between two ridges in the outskirts of Tagaytay City, is now playable.

Val Nepomuceno, executive assistant of Sta. Lucia Realty and Development Inc., bared this yesterday.

"With the world-famous Taal Volcano located in an island within an island and the mountain ranges above, the course offers a panoramic view while golfers go for pars and birdies," Nepomuceno said. "The course is very challenging and the weather is just as perfect."

Greg "The Shark" Norman designed the course which is only a 90-minute drive from Manila. Golfers are treated to the cool ambience of Tagaytay City and the beauty of Taal Lake.

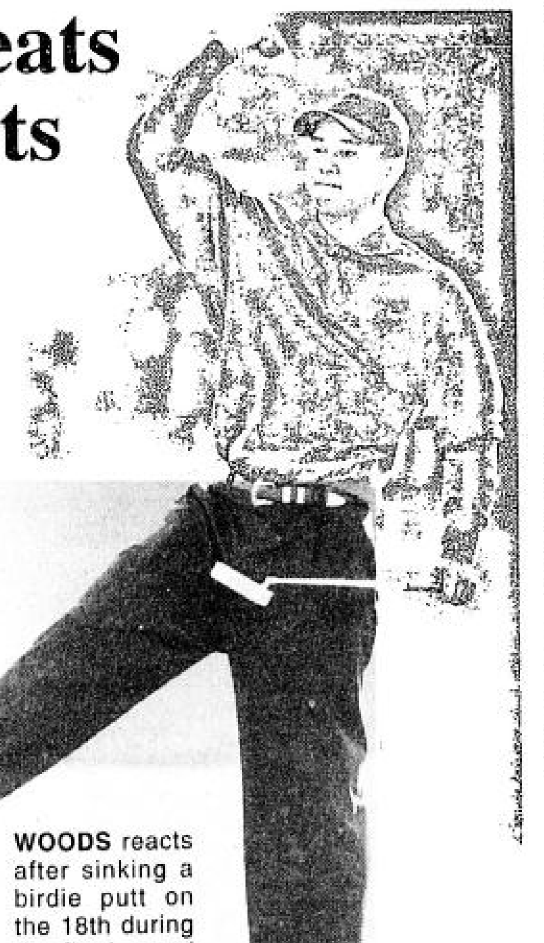
Nepomuceno also said that Sta. Lucia recently signed a joint venture agreement with the Jaka Group to develop the residential community, including the golf clubhouse, country clubhouse, residential condominiums and condotels.

"The golf and country clubhouses are now in the planning stage. Drawing from its long years of experience in developing golf and residential communities, Sta. Lucia envisions Splendido Taal to be a landmark development in the area," Nepomuceno added.

Sta. Lucia president and executive officer Exequiel Robles has granted the Fil-Estate Marketing Group, headed by Noel "Toti" Cariño, exclusive rights to market Splendido Taal because of its extensive network of highly motivated sales agents.

The Fil-Estate-Sta. Lucia partnership dates back to the eighties and has catapulted the two firms to the top of the country's real estate industry.

Tiger magic beats Singh by 3 shots



WOODS reacts after sinking a birdie putt on the 18th during the final round of the Williams World Challenge on Sunday. AP

THOUSAND OAKS, California—Tiger Woods—four strokes down at the turn—poured it on with five straight birdies Sunday to blow by Vijay Singh and win the Williams World Challenge, the final tournament of the season.

Woods tied the course record with an 8-under-par 64 to win by three strokes over Singh, then donated his $1 million check to the Tiger Woods Foundation.

He's not lacking for money, but the kind of round he put together at sunny Sherwood Country Club had not been seen in a while.

"I felt like I needed to put pressure on Vijay, and I was able to do that," said Woods, who finished at 273. "I'm pretty excited to win my tournament."

Singh, who started the final round with a four-stroke lead, made a few sloppy bogeys to contribute to the comeback, but there wasn't much he could do.

It started on No. 9, Woods' worst hole of the round.

He hit an iron off the tee so far to the right that it cleared a creek and settled in thick brush on the side of a hill. Woods took a penalty drop, then hit his approach under the bleachers behind the green. From there, his chip off a hardpan lie rolled 13.5 meters (45 feet) past the cup.

Turnaround

That's where the turnaround began.

Singh lagged his 28.5-meter (95-foot) putt to about 1.5 meters (5 feet) left for par. Woods rolled his bogey up the ridge and into the cup, then escaped with the same score when Singh pulled his par putt.

Singh figured to be leading by five strokes, perhaps even six.

Instead, the lead was at four, and the onslaught—a seven-shot swing over the next five holes - was just beginning.

Woods studied the slope of the 10th green, walked back about 45.5 meters (50 yards) to the fairway and played a slow pitch that just cleared the bunker, skipped through the green and up a hill, then rolled back to 46 centimeters (18 inches). Singh missed the green right and had no shot, chipping 9 meters (30 feet) down the slope and making bogey.

Woods holed a 3.6-meter (12-foot) birdie on No. 11 to pick up another stroke, then caught Singh with a 3.6-meter (12-foot) birdie putt on the par-3 12th.

Singh appeared to have the advantage on the par-5 13th, lying just 90 meters (99 yards) from the hole in the middle of the fairway. He hit his wedge too hard, over the green, then chipped back through the green and into a swale, escaping with bogey.

Rotary golf gets backing

TAYLOR Made-Adidas is keeping its support to the Rotary Golfing Fellowship Foundation of the Philippines (RGFFP) tournaments by hosting the 16th edition to be held at the Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay in Baguio City on Jan. 16-20, 2002.

Taylor Made Adidas is putting up a prize package which includes Taylor Made Firesole iron sets, Titanium drivers, travel bags and accessories that will be raffled off during the awards night.

Highlights of the eventful 15th RGFFP southern leg tournament were shown over NBN Channel 4. The special also included a feature on P1 million hole-in-one winner Rt. Nonoy Llamas. TV sponsors are PLDT, Taylor Made, Adidas, Smart, San Miguel Beer, SYM Mitsukoshi, General Nutrition Centers (GNC) and Roche-Berroca.

Registration and payment of entry fees for the Bugaboo event is ongoing at the RGFFP Secretariat at the GNC Building S. Laurel St., Mandaluyong City, tel. 721-8896/721-0546 and fax 721-8896/721-5940 and also at all GNC stores all over the country. Payments can be made in cash or checks payable to RGFFP and through credit cards at all GNC stores.

No retirement for Holyfield

MASHANTAUCKET, Connecticut—Evander Holyfield will continue to fight, but maybe never again for a heavyweight championship.

The 39-year-old Holyfield failed in his quest to become a champion for the fifth time early Sunday. John Ruiz kept the WBA title on a draw in their third— and certainly their last—fight in a bingo hall at Foxwoods Resort Casino.

"It was a great fight, and I take my hat off to him," said Ruiz before he went to a hospital to have his busted nose repaired.

It wasn't a great fight—too much mauling and clutching.

Each fighter thought he won, and Jim Thomas, Holyfield's attorney, was in high dudgeon, to the point he exchanged words with promoter Don King. *AP*

Malacañang dips hand into PSC anomaly

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PRESIDENTIAL Anti Graft Commission has expressed interest in the P2.6 million scandal allegedly involving some officials of the Philippine Sports Commission and the Philippine Amateur Cycling Association.

While tackling the graft charges filed by the Alliance of Coaches and Athletes of the Philippines against PSC chair Butch Tuason, PAGC officer in charge Teresita Baltazar has instructed the agency to furnish them copies of the questionable deal between the PSC and Paca.

Though Baltazar, speaking through Acap president Jaime Sebastian, claimed that they won't meddle with the ongoing internal conflict in Paca, the anti-graft commission will zero in on the involvement of at least two PSC employees in the questionable deal that involved cycling equipment.

The PAGC has been tasked by no less than President Arroyo as part of her promise to the national athletes and coaches to rid the sports agency of corruption during their meeting last month.

Paca president Ponciano Regalado and secretary general Armando Bautista were charged by Paca directors, athletes and trainers of getting P2.6 million from the PSC for the purchase of cycling equipment that allegedly turned out to be either undelivered or substandard.

Last week, Paca director Col. Romeo Modelo said they are filing graft charges against Regalado before the Ombudsman.

Modelo also slammed Regalado's claim that he was not yet the recognized Paca president when the association made the questionable purchase from Elixir Trading, owned incidentally by another Paca director Robert Magaway.

Gov. Piñol wants SEA in Mindanao

MINDANAO, a psychedelic blend of the old and new, has joined the bidders for the right to host the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol, also the newly elected president of the Confederation of Mindanao Governors, City and Municipal Mayors, yesterday told the INQUIRER that no less than five large cities will be at the forefront of the bid to host the biennial Games, which features Southeast Asia's premier athletes.

"We want to show the world and our ASEAN neighbors that peace reigns in Mindanao," said Gov. Piñol, whose victory in his new post just last month is another testament to his leadership qualities marked by a consistent tough stance on critical issues.

Previous bidders of the SEA Games are Pampanga, Bacolod and Cebu.

Piñol said Games events will be held at the cities of Davao, Marbel, Kidapawan, Cotabato and GenSan.

Davao, whose mayor Rudy Duterte is one of Mindanao's most avid sports supporters, is known for hosting the East Asia Growth Area Friendship Games.

Kidapawan, the capital of North Cotabato, has hosted two world boxing championships featuring world title-holders Manny Pacquiao and Luisito Espinosa.

GenSan, known as the country's tuna capital, has hosted multi-event national competitions. With its airport able to accommodate international flights, GenSan will also facilitate the travel of foreign competitors.

Manila last hosted the SEA Games in 1991. The Philippines finished second just one gold medal behind Indonesia,

A blend of economic woes and political upheavals prevented the country from hosting the prestigious event as it gave way to the likes of prosperous Brunei (1999) and Kuala Lumpur (2001), respectively.

Vietnam, a country rising from the ruins of war, will host the 2003 Games.

The SEA Games family also includes Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Singapore.

PIÑOL

La Salle blanks UE netters, 3-0

DE LA SALLE routed University of the East, 3-0, on Friday to move within a win of sweeping the first round of the University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) men's tennis tournament at the Valle Verde Country Club outdoor courts.

Pop Sabandon won the first singles over Ray Allan David, 6-3, 6-1.

Marcial Gino Almario and Andre Rommel Cruz defeated Teddy Danao and Peter John Perpetua, 6-3, 6-4 in the doubles and Johan Guba outplayed Jerry Bernabe, 6-2, 6-3 in the second singles as the Roland Kraut-mentored Green Netters notched their fourth win.

University of Santo Tomas and Ateneo also scored similar wins to remain tied for second at 3-1.

The Tigers, trained by Nilo Natividad, posted a 3-0 decision over Adamson with victories coming from Gabby Remigio, who beat Albert Dino Marasigan, 6-2, 6-4 in the first singles.

Karl Santamaria and Francis Venzon trounced Ariel Tio and Randy Baylon, 6-7 (4), 6-1, 7-6 (2), while Pius Ocampo swamped Gilbert Sinocruz, 6-1, 6-2, in the second singles.

Ateneo, handled by Dennis Sta. Cruz, banked on Neil Co, Stanley Ong, Francis Gee Abacan and Randy de Guzman to demolish University of the Philippines, 3-0.

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Lim, Badion lead Hall of Fame list

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

THE NATIONAL Basketball Hall of Fame is a project worthy of praise. Launched with much fanfare in 1999 by then congressman and now Bukidnon Gov. Joe Zubiri and other sportsmen-businessmen friends of means and goodwill, the first two induction ceremonies were grand affairs: highly successful and well-attended.

For the third batch of nominees, there are two basketball legends who are tops in my list. They are Eduardo "Eddie" Lim and Carlos "Charlie" Badion. While I don't want to ignore so many other great cagers of a bygone ear, I am citing the reasons why Lim and Badion should be considered. Briefly, here are their multipronged credentials:

·CARLOS BADION: A product of sandlot basketball, the 5-foot-10-1/2 Badion was known as the "Bad Boy" of Philippine basketball during the 1950s because of his rough and fearsome presence in the playing court. But outside of it, Badion was a good fellow with a soft heart for the Filipino athletes. He popularized the "bicycle drive" which the youth imitated.

Born on Aug. 16, 1935 in Lubao, Pampanga, Badion grew up in Tondo where he started his career by playing for Abad Santos High School then known as Meisic. He was spotted in the Interscholastic Games by Valerio "Amang" Lopez of Mapua Tech where he subsequently enrolled. In Mapua, his coach was Rafael "Ging" Roco. Aside from playing in the NCAA, Badion also shone in the MICAA, carrying the colors of Jacinto Rubber Shoes, Crispa and multi-titled YCO.

Badion served the country well. He proudly played for the Philippine team that finished a respectable seventh in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, not to mention that he was also a member of the national quintet that captured the 1958 Asian Games title in Tokyo and the nationals who saw action in the 1959 World Basketball Championsip in Chile. In 1960 Badion played for the Philippine team that won the inaugural ABC (Asian Basketball Confederation) championship hosted by Manila. That same year, he was the team captain of the RP five that participated in the Rome Olympics. He retired from active competition in 1960 after he twisted his right knee.

·EDUARDO LIM: Born on Oct. 13, 1930, Lim is an extraordinary player like fellow Bedans and Hall of Fame awardees Carlos Loyzaga and Antonio Genato. During his prime, Lim was a formidable guard who earned the monicker "Stonewall" from famous sportscaster Willie Hernandez. Cool, confident and calculated, he was much-admired because of his strong and solid defensive play.

As a player of multi-awarded champion team San Beda College in the 1950s, Lim played a key role in leading the Red Lions to the NCAA championships in 1951-52 and the National Open title, also in 1952. In the Asiad, Lim played for the Philippines that won the gold medals in 1954 in Manila under coach Herr Silva and in 1958 in Tokyo under coach Tito Eduque. He also competed in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics under Fely Fajardo; the 1956 Melbourne Games where the Filipinos, mentored by Leo Prieto, landed seventh; and the World Basketball Championship in 1959 in Chile under master bench tactician Baby Dalupan. Lim highlighted his career by playing for the YCO Painters that won the National Open crowns a record seventh straight years under Leo Prieto and Tito Eduque, capping it by winning the inaugural ABC championship in Manila in 1960.

Married to the former Luisa Ontengco, Lim became a successful businessman, achieving fame in the stock market where he is at present chairman emeritus of the Philippine Stock Exchange.

"Lim is a hands-down choice for the third batch of inductees to the Hall of Fame," sports critique and former POC president Julian Malonso said. "I can't think of a more deserving Hall of Famer."

Ucap derby tonight

MANDALUYONG Coliseum presents 50 fights today starting at 7 p.m. via the "Ucap Gaffers 4-Cock Derby."

The event's hosts are Ucap's trusted gaffers—Noli Estrellado, Jing Licares, Victor Medina, Albert Margen, Dante Aroni and Bonjing Catajan.

Seeing action tonight are Raymond Velayo, Arthur Osmena, Val Adriano, Tony Litonjua, Pol Estrellado, Patrick Antonio, Blandy Tolentino, Lito Orillaza, lawyer Rudy Salud, Tony Tan, Gov. Ito Ynares, Ucap president Butch Macasaet and Vic Yu, among others.

Call 531-4003, 531-4005, 534-4110 and 535-2341 for other details.

Raffle prizes include round trip tickets to Cebu, free stay at Waterfront Hotel and P10,000 each in pocket money.

Those who bought tickets in four Mandaluyong derbies—Rotary 5-Cock Derby (Dec. 1), Berong Javellana 4-Cock Derby (Dec. 8), Sagupaan Altuz 7-Cock Derby (Dec. 11 and 13) and tonight's derby are qualified in the raffle draw.

Navy sweeps Arap regatta

NAVY asserted its dominance in the local rowing scene yesterday, sweeping the 29th ARAP (Amateur Rowing Association of the Philippines) regatta for men and women to emerge as annual champion.

The Navymen collected 460 points to beat Philippine Christian University (400) and Pyros (310) in the men's annual competition, while their lady counterparts posted 230 points to pull away from PDRI-Fireblades (100) and St. Scholastica's Manila (60).

Navy won the men's event staged along Roxas Boulevard in 2 minutes 9.57 seconds, and the women's regatta in 2 minutes 62.10 seconds.

Seabees finished second in 2:12.54, followed by PCU (2:27.64) and Pyros A (2:40.60) in the men's division while PDRI-Fireblades checked in second in the women's competition in 3:14.59. Aqua Fortis wound up third (3:19.48) while St. Scholastica was fourth (3:22.65).

Pyros B ruled the "petite" finals by clocking 2:26.08. It beats RCP (2:28.40), Philippine Clearing House (2:29.92) and San Beda (2:47.80).

National coach Nestor Ilagan supervised the event staged by the ARAP headed by Philippine Olympic Committee treasurer Benjie Ramos.

NCR CHAMPS

Christian "Ayo" Canlas (4th from left) poses with fellow Ateneo winner Daniel Luis Macalino (5th from left) and coach Ronaldo de Guzman (6th from left) in the recent NCR Palaro netfest. Also in photo are gold medalists Jessica 'Agra and Kyle Dandan of CSA-Makati (2nd and 3rd from left, respectively) and their coach Luisito S. Hipolito

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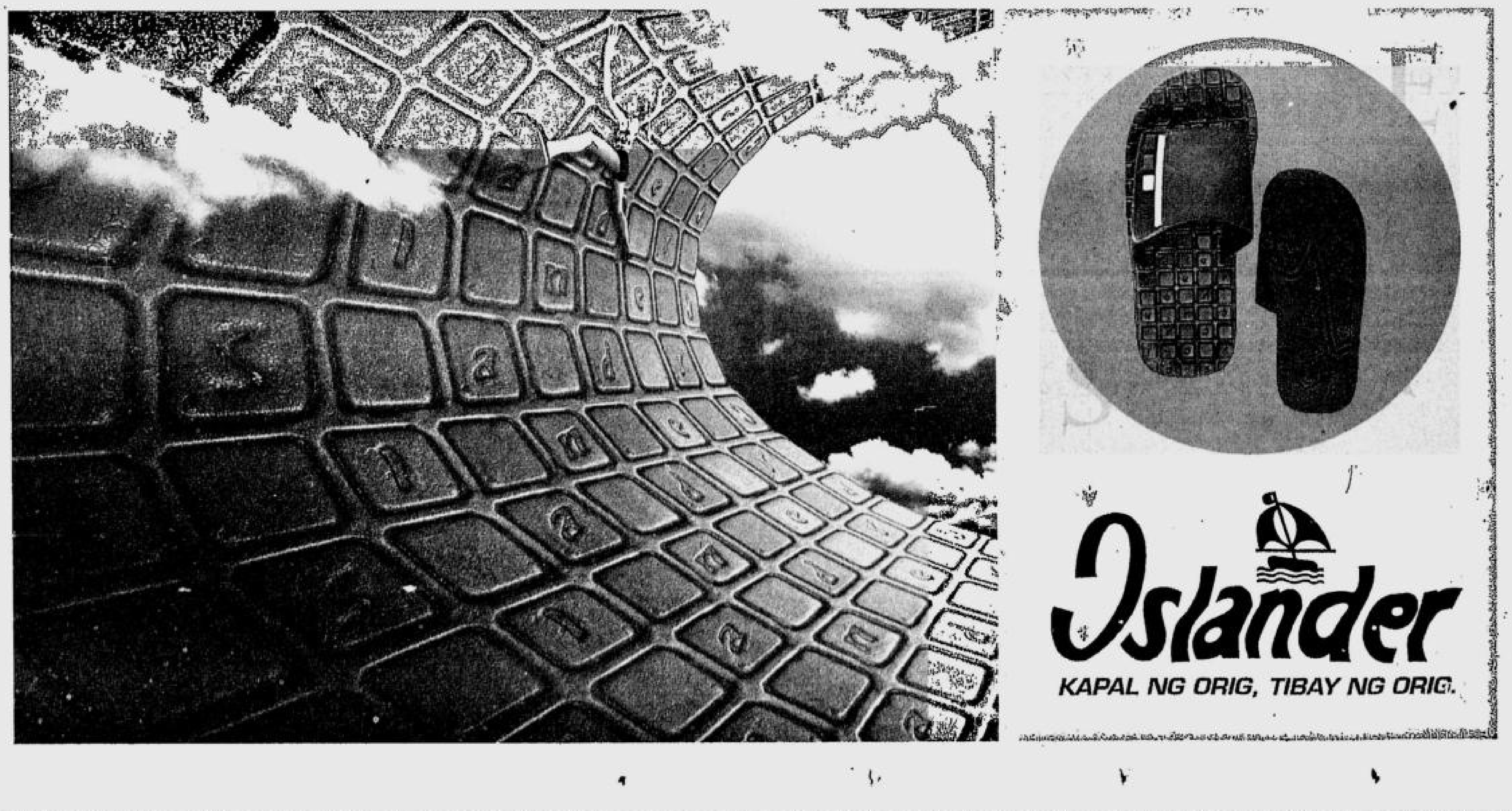


PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SPORTS
AL S. MENDOZA, Editor ▪ EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA, Assistant Editor

Drunk Rockets star nabbed

HOUSTON —Injured Houston Rockets point guard Steve Francis was arrested Sunday and charged with driving while intoxicated. Francis was stopped around 5 a.m. after an officer saw him run a red light, police spokesman Alvin Wright said. Francis was released on bail later Sunday. He did not comment as he left the jail. A hearing is set for Friday. The Rockets did not immediately return a message seeking comment. *AP*

PBL CHALLENGE

Shark vs Welcoat today

GAMES TODAY (Makati Coliseum)
3:30 p.m.—Ana Freezers vs Blu Detergent
5:30 p.m.Welcoat Paints vs Shark Energy

STANDINGS	W	L
ICTSI Archers	7	2
Shark	6	3
Blu	6	3
Welcoat	5	4
Kutitap	4	6
Ateneo-Pioneer	4	6
Ana Freezers	3	6
Montaña	3	8

By Dennis U. Eroa

DEFENDING champion Shark Energy Drink tries to repeat over archrival Welcoat Paints, while Blu Detergent aims to remain within striking distance when it clashes with unpredictable Ana Freezers today in the PBL Challenge Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

Chester Tolomia's gun-beating triple gave Shark a nail-biting 78-76 victory over Welcoat in the first round. Shark shares second spot with Blu Detergent with a 6-3 card, while Welcoat occupies solo fourth at 5-4.

The top two teams at the end of the eliminations will gain a free ride to the semifinals, with the remaining four qualifiers slugging it out in the crossover quarterfinals.

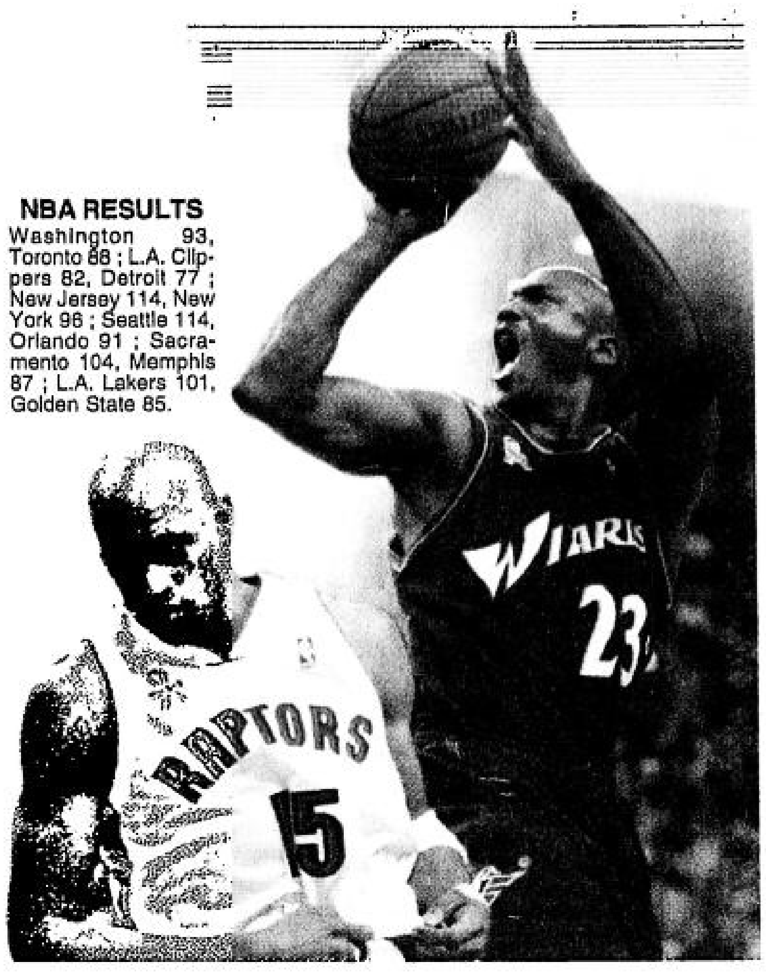
Welcoat is battling inconsistency going through the crucial stages of the game. While Ren Ren Ritualo has remained the league's deadliest gunner, Welcoat's other big guns—Jojo Manalo, Yancy de Ocampo, Celino Cruz, Eugene Tan and Brix Encarnacion—are playing hot and cold.

Shark lost its last outing to Kutitap Toothpaste and coach Leo Austria's charges are determined to come back. Tolomia, Gilbert Malabanan, Michael Robinson, Warren Ybañez and Jing Rodriguez will join hands to beat the Paintmasters.

Slotman Marlon Legaspi, Egay Billones, Nani Epondulan and Edwin Bacani banner Blu's bid against the Roland Pascual-led Ana squad.

Other Ana reliables are Ronald Tubid and Dondon Mendoza.

NBA RESULTS
Washington 93, Toronto 88 ; L.A. Clippers 82, Detroit 77 ; New Jersey 114, New York 96 ; Seattle 114, Orlando 91 ; Sacramento 104, Memphis 87 ; L.A. Lakers 101, Golden State 85.



TORONTO Raptors' Vince Carter (15) backs off as Washington Wizards' Michael Jordan (23) soars in for a basket in the fourth quarter. The Wizards won, 93-88. AP

FedEx not paying fines of Tanduay

By Roy Luarca

GOOD thing FedEx won't have to pay the fines and penalties Tanduay incurred in its three-year stint in the PBA, or else it would have to cough up with at least P10 million more to purchase Lucio Tan's franchise.

The term sheet signed recently by FedEx president Lito Alvarez and Tanduay CEO Wilson Young did not include the assumption of Tanduay's liabilities to the league, which turned out to be staggering.

Last year, the Rhummasters were fined P2.5 million for refusing to pay in the All-Filipino semifinals after Sonny Alvarado failed to prove his Filipino citizenship and left in a huff.

A few months later they were meted a whopping P7-million penalty for using Fil-Ams Eric Menk and Rudy Hatfield for seven games with incomplete immigration papers.

More money

Another Fil-Am, Jeffrey Cariaso, was slapped a P22,000 fine for getting two technical fouls and breaking a glass door during the 2001 First Conference. A new case purportedly involving Jayvee Gayoso would cost Tanduay more money, according to a PBA insider.

Tanduay doesn't mind paying as it was Young himself who reportedly asked the PBA honchos to compute the fines and penalties it has to pay to clear the way for FedEx's assumption of the franchise next year.

The total fine will substantially reduce Tanduay's share of the PBA revenues from television and radio broadcasts, gate receipts and the PBA Property Inc.

Estimates put a PBA team's gross share at over P25 million per year, but being a newcomer, Tanduay would only get 60 percent share for 1999 and 80 percent for last year. Tanduay will get its full share this year.

In a related development, Young and Alvarez were seen conferring with PBA Commissioner Jun Bernardino, executive director Sonny Barrios and legal counsel Butch Cleofe at the Manila Peninsula on Saturday.

Lucio Tan gave his blessings to the deal after meeting with Alvarez and FedEx chair Bert Lina and Young and Jimmy Bautista, the chief financial officer of the Lucio Tan Group of Companies, at the Century Park Sheraton Friday night.

PBA board tackles deal

By June Navarro

JUST how valid was the sale of Tanduay's PBA franchise to FedEx will be tested today as the Board of Governors convenes for the last time this year to tackle the deal.

The PBA Board will also try to validate the transfer of RFM's franchise to San Miguel Corp., which is aiming to increase its number of teams in the league to four.

These issues, however, need the affirmation of at least six out of the nine members of the Board of Governors to legitimize all the wheeling and dealing that took place.

Except for Purefoods, which lost its voting powers after it was granted to have an indefinite stay in the PBA, all team representatives are expected to grace the 5 p.m. gathering at the Manila Golf Club.

Last week, FedEx, owner of the Laguna Lakers in the MBA, purchased the Tanduay PBA franchise at P75 million or P15 million larger than its original price when the Lucio Tan-owned company bought it in 1999.

As agreed upon, FedEx will cough up a P25-million down payment and shell out P10 million during the 2002, 2003 and 2004 PBA seasons before paying the P20-million balance at the start of the 2005 season.

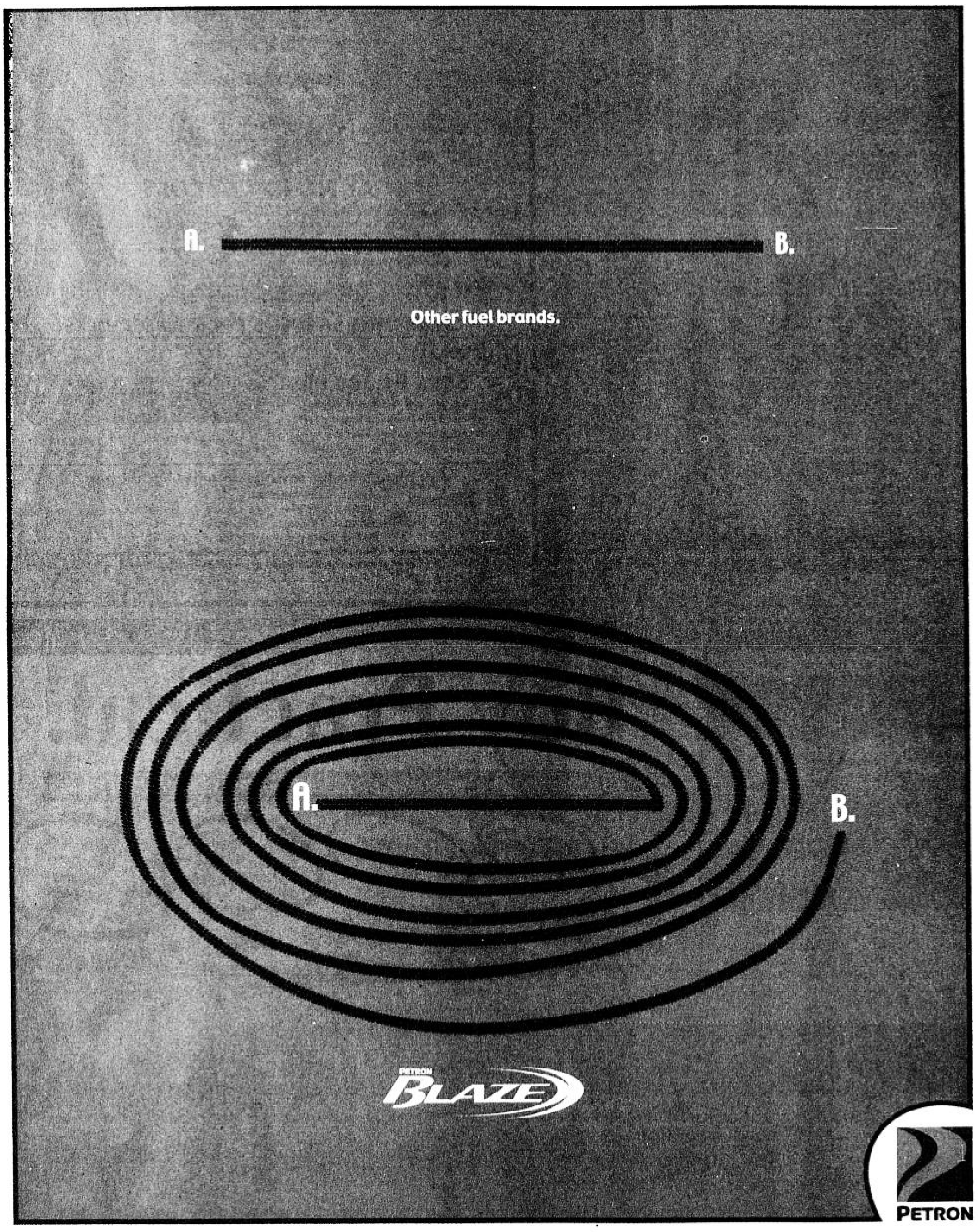
Should FedEx persuade the board, it would formally acquire the core of the Tanduay team plus the top two first-round draft picks next year the Rhummasters recently won from the lottery.

FedEx is reportedly eyeing MBA stars like Rommel Adducul and Chris Clay who are expected to join the annual draft on Jan. 13 along with a bevy of promising Fil-Americans.

Just the same, the transfer of RFM's franchise to SMC will also allow the Danding Cojuangco-owned food and beverage conglomerate to acquire Pop Cola's draft rights for 2001.

SMC, which purchased Purefoods early this year, has acquired Cosmos Bottling Corp. lock, stock and barrel from the Concepcion-owned RFM Group of Companies.

Once the Board rejects SMC's plea, RFM will take control of the franchise and rename its team from Pop Cola to Selecta.



How do you burn more rubber without burning more fuel? Simply pump up with Blaze. Because at this year's Honda Civic Eco Challenge, 1 liter of Blaze lasted 24.97 kms under highway driving conditions. That's 13 kms more than 1 liter of gas usually lasts. And it was done down South with a Philippine Motor Association representative behind the wheel. But what was even more impressive was when Pocholo Ramirez, participating in the tactical driving category, reached an astounding 49.68 kms to 1 liter of our gas. Talk about fuel efficiency that runs circles around the other brands.

METRO
LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

Slay umbrella traced to Rod Strunk

BY PHILIP C. TUBEZA

STRUNK

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation is set to summon Nida Blanca's friend, Candelaria Tantoco, but the slay probe yesterday focused on the umbrella believed to have been used in the murder.

An NBI source said the umbrella that the killers used in stabbing Blanca belongs to her husband, Rod Strunk.

The same source said informants in the Blanca household identified the umbrella as that of

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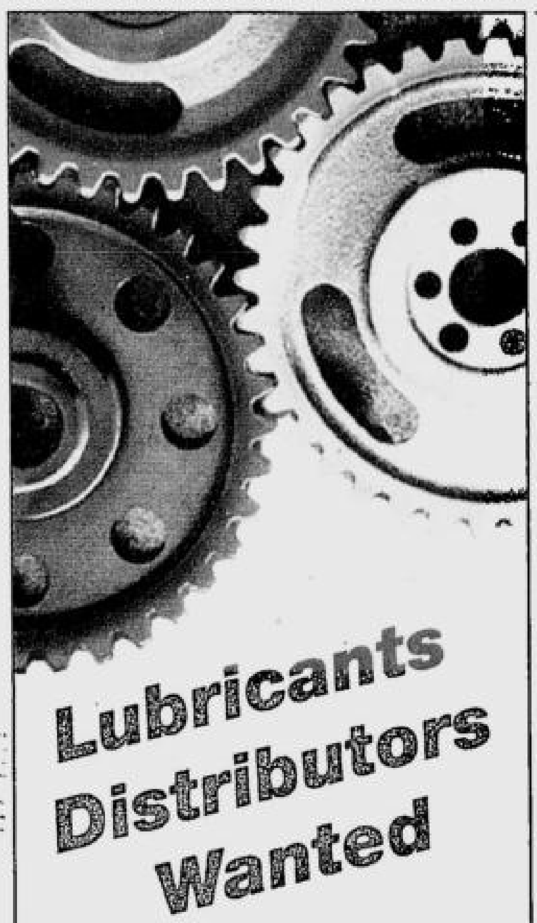
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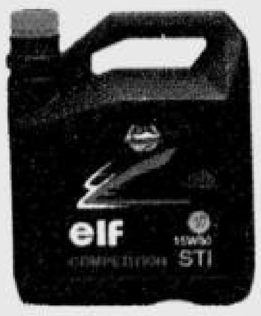
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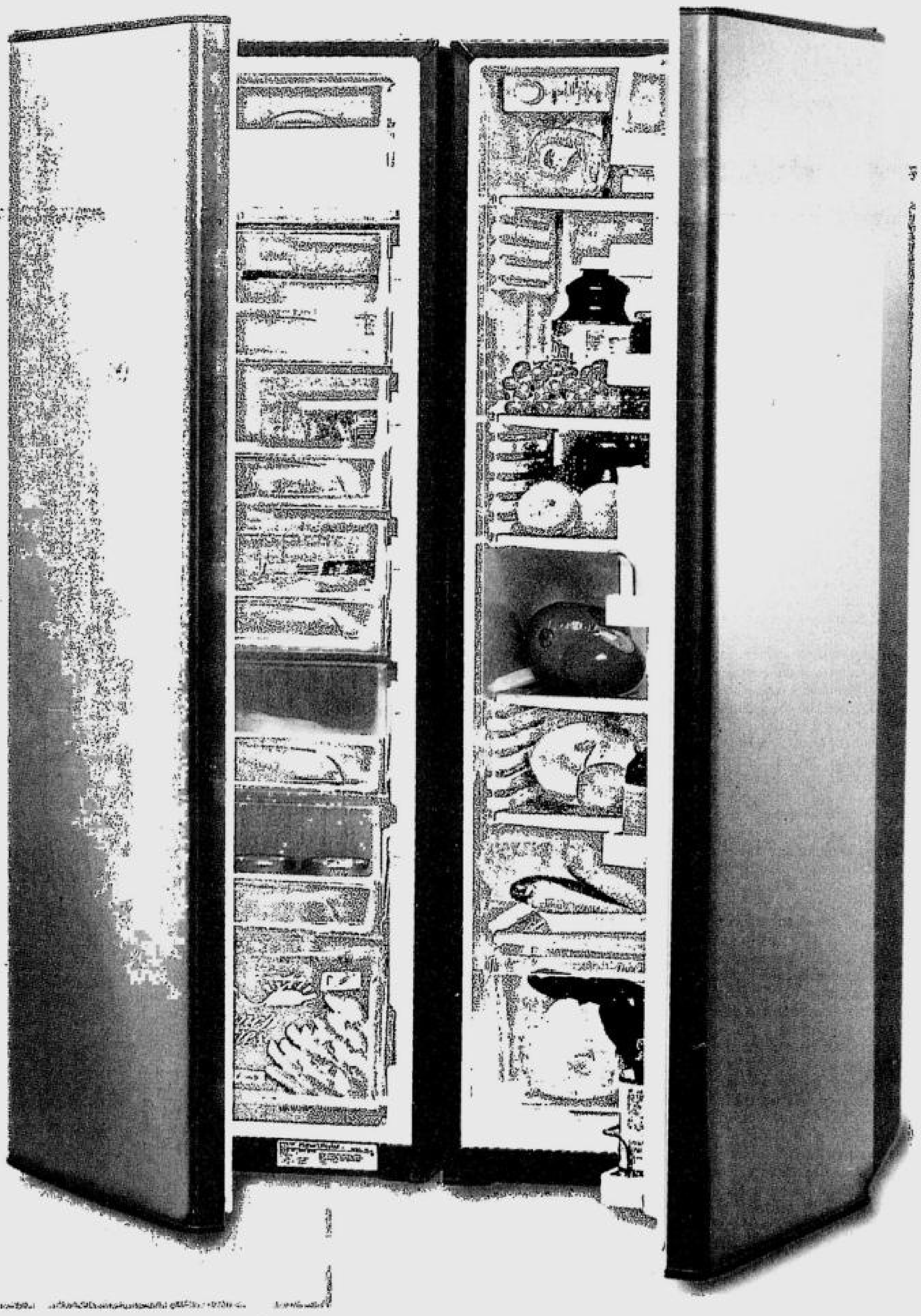
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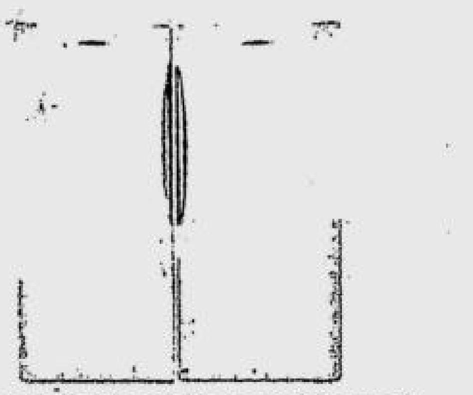
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Mayors huff and puff to beat trash deadline

By Christian V. Esguerra, Alcuin Papa and Christine Gaylican

SOME Metro Manila mayors fear they cannot beat the Christmas deadline, set by no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo, to resolve the worsening garbage problem in the metropolis.

At the latest, local governments will need two to three years to rid Metro Manila of its garbage problems, said Caloocan Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo.

"By that time, Metro Manila will be totally clean," Malonzo said in a telephone interview yesterday. "You won't see any garbage in the streets."

Malonzo, a staunch supporter of Ms Macapagal, said mayors are now hard-pressed responding to the President's call for an immediate solution to the garbage problem. The President set the deadline for the mayors during a recent summit on garbage.

And, to make matters worse, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is taking a long time to study Thermoselect, the new technology touted to be the key to solving Metro Manila's garbage woes.

The National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWC) yesterday said the DENR is still carefully studying the new garbage disposal technology, which is being pushed by the Metro Manila Development Authority and some city mayors.

"No clearance has been issued yet for Thermoselect, we are studying if it is not violating the Clean Air Law," said NSWC Executive Director Albert Magalang.

He added the DENR has to validate claims of Greenpeace Philippines that the Thermoselect process involves incineration, which is banned under the Clean Air Law.

The DENR said in an earlier statement that it would rule on the use of Thermoselect before the holidays. But Magalang doubted that, saying the environment department still has to finish the implementing rules and regulations for the Clean Air Law, before it can issue a ruling.

As a stopgap measure to keep the garbage from piling up on city streets especially during the holidays, the MMDA has been utilizing six open dumps in nearby provinces.

MMDA chair Abalos said the dumpsites are located in Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Batangas and Bulacan. He did not say which towns or barangays hosted the open dumps or how long the MMDA has been using them.

According to Abalos, this is how the MMDA will keep its promise of a "garbage-free" metropolis this Christmas.

The MMDA has been allowed to use the dumpsites on condition that the agency will pay "tipping fees" to the host municipalities.

Aside from paying the fees, the MMDA will also shoulder the expenses in "upgrading" the "open dumpsites."

The use of open dumpsites was banned with the passage of Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

"We provide the chemicals such as deodorizers, even the manpower and equipment, so that somehow these 'open' dumpsites will comply with the provisions of the law," Abalos explained.

The MMDA is just waiting for the completion of the Navotas landfill project and another sanitary landfill in Rodriguez, Rizal.

Rodriguez town residents have since voiced their strong opposition to the presence of the landfill in their backyard.

This coming January, the local governments of Manila and Navotas may open their joint multimillion-peso garbage control facility.

Navotas Mayor Tobias Tiangco said he and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza are still waiting for a written approval from the MMDA before they can proceed with the operation of the 10-hectare facility in Barangay Tanza, Navotas.

The facility, which costs P70 to P100 million, can accommodate 2,000 tons of garbage from Navotas and Manila, according to Tiangco.

Mayor Freddie Tinga of Taguig said his town is "doing fairly well" in the garbage disposal area.

"I'm pleasantly surprised to see that my town is very clean," Tinga said. "Perhaps that's because we have a good contractor and efficient street sweepers."

But Tinga admitted Taguig's current garbage system—which basically taps a contractor to dispose of its wastes—is a temporary measure.

"The MMDA really has to come up with a permanent solution to the garbage problem," Tinga said. "We don't know how long we can manage our garbage."

METRO MANILA MAYORS' SPOUSES FOUNDATION
CHRISTMAS PARTY
WACK-WACK GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

SETTING aside the garbage problem for the moment, Metro Manila mayors are in holiday mood as they pose with their respective spouses for posterity.

Tourist loses ₱2.46M to beggars

By Philip C. Tubeza

HE was in a hurry and failed to give alms.

Japanese tourist Oriei Kurita, 30, paid dearly for the oversight as he lost his Bulgari wristwatch, Prada suit and other expensive valuables worth P2.46 million to beggars in Ermita yesterday.

Kurita, a native of Nagoya, Japan, and currently billeted at the Royal Palm Hotel along Mabini in Ermita, told the police he lost six million yen worth of valuables to four mendicant teenagers, said investigator PO3 Renato Daray, of the Western Police District Station V investigation bureau.

Besides the expensive suit and wristwatch, the victim also lost his shaver, swimming trunks, an Apple MP3 player, body soap, and a DVD player, which were all in his backpack that the suspects snatched.

Daray said the incident happened around 6 p.m. Sunday along Mabini Street. The victim, who arrived three days ago from Japan, said he was going to have dinner when the beggars struck.

One of the four suspects, whom Kurita described as an adolescent, put out his hand to ask for loose change.

But the victim, who was in a hurry, said he did not notice the beggar.

A few seconds later, the four suspects ganged up on Kurita.

Three beggars held down the tourist with their hands while a fourth member snatched Kurita's backpack.

The suspects then fled toward an unknown direction. The victim returned to his hotel and reported the incident around noon yesterday. Kurita is scheduled to fly back to Japan today.

"These could be solvent boys who also go around begging. The thing is, they might sell the Bulgari watch and Prada suit for just P100, just so they could finance their addiction," Daray said.

GMA hit for failure in stopping Mehan mess

By Jerome Aning

A MANILA conservationist yesterday blamed President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration for the cultural and historical "desecration" of the 140-year-old Mehan Garden, when it did nothing to oppose the construction of the controversial Park 'N Ride facility on the site.

That the three-story parking structure was allowed to open on Saturday meant that cultural heritage is one of the least priorities of the Macapagal administration, said Tina Testa, a city-based conservationist and historical researcher.

"The President is supposed to be aware of cultural concerns like this since she is a graduate of a school for the cultured," Testa said, referring to Ms Macapagal's alma mater, Assumption College.

In a phone interview, Testa said she and other conservationists and environmentalists met several times with Vicky Garchitorena, head of the Presidential Management Staff, who promised to inform the president about their plea.

But Testa said the national government "failed miserably" to act against Park 'N Ride. It also did nothing when the Manila city government defied Malacañang, she added.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and officials of the Makati City-based Park 'N Ride Inc. opened the facility to the public last Saturday. The facility can accommodate up to 300 motor vehicles at a time.

The National Historical Institute and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, both under the Office of the President, opposed the construction of the facility.

Testa said the case was referred to the Office of the Solicitor General, but the OSG has yet to rule on the case. The conservationist said she will meet OSG lawyers today to discuss the future of the historical site.

"We conservationists will not surrender on this one, as the law is on our side," she told the INQUIRER in an interview. "We will make sure that the Park 'N Ride building will be torn down and the place preserved as a historical and archeological site."

Eight men rob Mercury drug

EIGHT unidentified men barged into the Mercury drug store in Quezon City early yesterday morning and fled with over P20,000 in cash. The suspects were reportedly armed with handguns and M-16 rifles when they robbed the drug store on Quezon Avenue corner Scout Borromeo shortly after midnight yesterday. They fled on board a Toyota Lite Ace, a Honda City and a motorcycle.

Metro Manila police chief Edgar Aglipay has ordered the Central Police District to expedite the investigation of the robbery, following reports that police failed to respond to the incident.

Agnes Donato

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IMPORTED TOYS

HOLIDAY HEAP

This definitely is Divisoria, bursting at the seams these days with shoppers snapping up everything, from aprons to zippers. This boy, who appears to be dancing, stays on top of his world hawking his wares. As expected, there's always a heady mix of merriment and chaos in the choked, clogged center of the cheap metropolitan commerce.

ERIK ARAZAS

Priests should not be armed

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

SEN. PANFILO "Ping" Lacson had a meeting with Moro leader Nur Misuari on Sulawesi island on the Indonesian side of Borneo recently, according to very reliable intelligence reports reaching this writer.

The one-on-one talk with Misuari came after Lacson's trip to Sabah to negotiate with a third party for the release of American missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham. The Burnhams are being held by Abu Sayyaf terrorists on Basilan Island.

Why did Lacson meet with Misuari when he knows that the Moro leader is wanted in this country? And why is the senator making efforts to have the Burnhams released when that's not his job as a lawmaker?

* * *

First, let's tackle the question of why Lacson is very much interested in negotiating for the release of the American couple.

The neophyte senator, who set his eyes on the 2004 presidential election, wants the US government to support him in his presidential bid. Apparently, Lacson thinks that if the Burnhams would be released on account of him, Uncle Sam might took kindly on him.

Remember that time last year when Lacson told an influential US senator that he was the best replacement for Erap who was already beset by a clamor to step down? At that time, Lacson was Erap Estrada's national police chief.

* * *

Now, that meeting between Lacson and Misuari is really mysterious. Contrary to reports that Misuari was being detained by the Malaysian authorities, he can move around freely as intelligence reports indicated.

Being the former chief of the Philippine National Police, Lacson should have avoided Misuari, a crime offender, like the plague.

Was Lacson negotiating the surrender of Misuari to the Philippine government? I doubt it.

* * *

Like his negotiations for the release of the Burnhams, Lacson's motives in having a one-on-one with Misuari on Sulawesi were less than ideal.

The former senator probably sought the Moro leader's help in the destabilization moves against the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Again, there are intelligence reports coming my way indicating that several groups have banded together to stage a coup early next year, possibly before or during the Edsa 1 celebration in February.

* * *

Lacson, according to the same intelligence reports, is funding the destabilization efforts that would culminate in February 2002.

Some people are going the rounds convincing active and retired military and police generals to join in the planned coup d'etat. The planned coup reportedly has the support of officers from the rank of lieutenant colonel down.

One of those involved in recruiting would-be coup participants is allegedly retired Constabulary Brig. Gen. Edgardo Abenina, now the chief of the Land Transportation Office (LTO), according to my sources.

Talagang ahas itong si Abenina!

* * *

If Lacson was able to convince Misuari to take part in the planned coup, forces loyal to President Macapagal Arroyo would be hardput fighting on two fronts: in Mindanao and in Metro Manila.

If the Moro rebellion erupts anew at the same time that rightist rebels try a power grab in Metro Manila, loyal government forces would be divided.

That's a very scary scenario.

* * *

I am for the arming of responsible citizens to protect themselves from criminals.

Every responsible, law-abiding citizen has the right to protect his life and property, those of his family members and even of those of strangers who are victimized by criminals in his presence. A gun has a way of making things even for a law-abiding citizen vis-à-vis criminal elements.

But I don't subscribe to the idea of arming Catholic priests to protect themselves from bandits and kidnappers.

* * *

The Most Rev. Antonio Franco, papal nuncio, said arming priests is a "crazy idea."

A crazy idea, indeed! For priests are soldiers of God on earth, not warriors of this world.

When Jesus Christ enjoined his flock to turn the other cheek after their enemy slapped them on one cheek, that injunction was especially made to His apostles, the precursors of today's priests. Meekness should be the priest's guiding principle.

* * *

You can't blame priests for wanting to arm themselves in the face of kidnapping and murder of members of the clergy in Mindanao. The perpetrators are mostly Moro bandits and rebels who have no respect for Christianity.

But if priests fight fire with fire, they would no longer be convincing to their teachings that the meek would inherit the earth.

Fathers, leave it to your beleaguered faithful to fight back. What you can do is pray for them.

* * *

Just a personal observation: Most Catholic priests who are gun fanciers are either hard drinkers or womanizers.

Not that I care. That's their business.

But I see a correlation between guns and women. And priests who love guns also love wine and women.

Goons make it two in a row over lawmen

A DAY after robbers stabbed and injured a senior Western Police District lawman, robbers struck again and held up a rookie policeman in a jeepney along Taft Avenue in Ermita, Manila yesterday.

P01 Roberto dela Peña, of 448 Herbosa St., Tondo, Manila, who is still undergoing training at the WPD headquarters, lost his mission order, driver's license, and P1,500 in cash to five knife-wielding jeepney robbers, said investigator P03 Carlos M. Santos of the WPD Station V.

Another passenger, Danilo O. Pablo, 36, of Fairview, Quezon City lost his Seiko diver's watch, and P6,000 in cash to the robbers, Santos added.

He said the policeman, who was unarmed and in civilian clothes, boarded the southbound jeep in Quiapo around 6 a.m. yesterday.

When the jeep reached Sta. Isabel College, the suspect pulled out their knives and announced the holdup.

The culprits then proceeded to divest the passengers of their belongings. After getting their loot, the suspects pointed their knives at Dela Peña's face, and told him and other passengers not to follow. The suspects got off the jeep at UN Avenue and fled toward an unknown direction.

On Saturday night, SP02 Jose Toledo of the WPD Station III was wounded after two men, identified only as the Bartolome brothers, tried to rob him.

Philip Tubeza

Slay . . .

(From page A23)

Strunk. The vital evidence was reportedly seen before the murder inside Strunk's Nissan Vannette vehicle.

The mysterious umbrella was next found under Blanca's lifeless body at the backseat of her Nissan sedan at the Atlanta Centre building in San Juan, another source said.

The source said Blanca had wounds in her armpit, "which were apparently inflicted by an umbrella."

The NBI is now in possession of the umbrella, which had Blanca's bloodstains, the source added.

Besides this discovery, investigators were also trying to determine if Strunk was telling the truth when he claimed that he only went out once of his White Plains home on the night Blanca was killed.

Witnesses at the upscale subdivision told the NBI that Strunk went out twice, the second time at around 3 to 4 a.m., the time forensic experts say Blanca was murdered.

Meanwhile, NBI spokesperson Rick Diaz said yesterday that radio reporter Red Cruz told investigators that his grandmother Elena dela Paz, Blanca's long-time aide, was with the actress at the Atlanta Centre minutes before the actress was slain. Cruz claimed Dela Paz told him that she and Nida went back to Atlanta Centre around 3 to 4 a.m. on Nov. 7.

The victim allegedly told Dela Paz to stay put while she got her car. But Dela Paz followed Nida and "saw two to three men stab and maul" the victim.

Cruz claimed he got the information from Dela Paz herself on the morning of Nov. 7, Diaz said.

M2M. They take pride in having composed most of the songs in the album.

M2M

Marit and Marion no ordinary Nordics

BY MARINEL R. CRUZ

IF THE M2M duo Marit Larsen and Marion Ravn were to have it their way, they would be attending ordinary schools, leading ordinary lives. But the young pop crooners, who are currently on the last leg of their Southeast Asian tour, are no ordinary girls. They seem to have the world as their classroom.

Recently in Manila to promote their second album "The Big Room," Marit, 18, and Marion, 17, said they sometimes feel that, because they do not go to school, they are missing out on things happening to girls their age.

Though performing for people is what they have always wanted, the two said being on the road most of the time has kept them from "hanging out with friends, talking about crushes or doing stuff like normal teenagers."

"But what's good about it is that we get to perform and see countries we've never been to," Marion said.

The Norwegian teeners are into "mobile schooling," a non-formal sort of education where children, supervised by their parents, follow a scheduled curriculum generally centered on their interests.

Marion's father, Haliger John Ravn, a schoolteacher, helps in seeing to it that the two, who both prefer English to Mathematics, hit the books when they are not performing. Marit, meanwhile, submits assigned work to a tutor in Norway through fax or email.

Marit usually has her mom to accompany her whenever M2M goes on tour, but not this time.

"She (Marit) is touring without a parent for the first time this year," M2M manager Thomas Erdtmam said. "Under Norwegian law, she's already an adult at 18 years old."

Marit and Marion said they never had to deal with jealousy in the family, in terms of getting more of their parents' attention than their siblings.

"They (siblings) understand that our parents need to accompany us on trips like this," they said. "We miss them terribly, and if it were only possible, we'd like them to come along."

M2M recorded "The Big Room" in Woodstock, New York, but shot their "Everything" music video in Los Angeles. They have yet to release their record in the States.

"Here in Asia, a lot of people know our music and it feels weird how a lot of people know who we are," Marion said.

They said fans who appreciated their previous album, "Shades of Purple," will like their new album even more.

They take pride in having composed most of the songs in the album.

"Our album is pretty different now," Marit said. "It's about real things, not just love, but friendship and jealousy. We really say what we mean."

After two years, the pair has clearly gone a long way from the cute teenyboppers they used to be. Now they are trying to look daring.

Asked about this noticeable change, something that is evident in their latest video offering, Marit replied: "I think it's natural because we've *really* grown older and taller ... but we still have our morals. You'll never see us wearing bikinis."

The girls will start shooting the video for their "What You Do About Me" single in Thailand early next year. The video's concept, they said, will surprise their fans.

Marit and Marion, still reeling from the success of their launch party at the World Trade Center in Pasay City, said the experience was the "wildest we've ever had."

"We never expected a crowd as big as that to turn up," they said.

According to Marit, their success here "makes us more attached to Filipinos more than ever."

"We hope to be able to come back to Southeast Asia," she added.

The two said going solo is far from their minds because they are having so much fun with what they are doing together right now.

"We have work and friendship, I don't think it's going to change," Marion said.

M2M will head to the US next year for a western promo tour.

David Pomeranz, a product of a 'renaissance guy'

BY LEAH SALTERIO

POMERANZ. Adopted son of Philippine entertainment.

INTERNATIONAL balladeer David Pomeranz has been in Manila countless times. Since the '80s when his songs like "Got To Believe in Magic" and "King and Queen of Hearts" became music anthems nationwide, David has maintained his love affair with Filipinos.

Two years ago, he even came with his wife Kelly, with whom he has a son, Nicholas.

This time, David has a different companion in his ongoing Philippine tour to promote his latest album, "On This Day."

For the first time, he takes his dad, Mel, to an Asian juggernaut, which will see David performing even in the provinces like Cebu.

The elder Pomeranz is very pleased to witness the success of his son in the Philippines. When David asked him to join the tour, Mel didn't pass up the opportunity to visit the Philippines for the first time. And once here, Mel didn't mind keeping up with the rigorous schedule of David's tour. He goes with him even in mall shows, TV appearances and live concerts.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world," Mel tells the INQUIRER.

Musical talent

David attests he took his musical talent after his father whom, he says, is also an accomplished singer, painter—"a renaissance kind of guy."

"We enjoy each other's company," David says. "We share a certain feeling about life which gives us a commonality among one another. He's very easy to deal with. What you see is what you get."

Mel shares David started singing in a synagogue choir with him in New York.

"I never knew of a time that David won't be a musical talent even when he was younger," Mel says. "At 5, he already displayed his flair for music. It was not surprising to us. He is multi-talented because he also writes his own songs.

"We always knew one day he would be big. His happiness and success are mine. I guess if you dedicate your life to something you love, you win."

Apart from religious music, David was also exposed to the classics when he was growing up.

"My parents played music by Rodgers and Hammerstein, Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and other beautiful classics," David recalls. "The tunes moved me very deeply and made me want to listen to beautiful music all the time."

Incurable romantics

David is no stranger to incurable romantics, who have embraced his ballads as their own love themes. His name is synonymous with his timeless songs, like "Got To Believe in Magic," "King and Queen of Hearts," "Trying To Get the Feeling Again," "If You Walked Away," among many others.

David has undeniably carved a niche in Philippine recording. His album, "Born for You," became a multi-platinum release, on top of his chart-busters.

Last year, he recorded a special Yuletide musical outing, "The Eyes of Christmas," which MCA-Universal releases again this year, in time for the holiday season.

The adopted son of Philippine entertainment is back with a new album, "On This Day," which carries the trademark David Pomeranz tunes. Most of the instrumental tracks in the album were done in Manila with Filipino musicians. The songs were arranged by Lorrie Illustre.

"David is very generous about his feelings and he is truthful to his lyrics," notes Mel. "That is best seen in a lot of his songs. His whole life opens up when he writes a song."

Song for dad

David once gifted his dad with a song, "Father's Thoughts," included in the album, "Time To Fly."

The singer also wrote a song for his seven-month-old son, "Dear Little Nicholas."

"On This Day," the title track of his latest release, is a song David wrote for his wife of 12 years, Kelly, whom he also considers his soulmate and friend.

"I was teary-eyed as I try to reminisce the joy I felt on the day I took Kelly to be my lifetime partner," David says. "It was the best decision I ever made in my life."

In the song's refrain, David shares with music fans the touching scene on his wedding day: *"On this day, I promise forever/ On this day, I surrender my heart/ Here I stand, take my hand/ And I will honor every word that I say/ On this day."*

The album has a sentimental value for David. It was in the initial stage of its production in Manila when he got a call from Kelly, who told him she was pregnant with their first baby.

"It was wonderful to hear the news," he says. "I'm amazed that I waited this long to become a father. It's the most amazing thing in the world."

Important event

The birth of his son inspired David to create more beautiful lyrics and melodies. In every important event in his life, David underscores it with his music.

"Music interests me intensely, makes me feel alive and gives me purpose in life," he allows. "It has become a very important part of my life. It's horrible to imagine life without music."

The singer has apparently validated his love affair with Filipinos, so that he never gets tired of coming back to the country.

"It's my pleasure to give that my fans here keep asking for more music," David says. "The perk is that I'm enjoying myself so much every time I come here. It's always a delight."

MCA Universal, David's recording company, extends full support to him in promoting his latest album. The outfit is also planning to produce a CD, with David recording with Martin Nievera, another best-selling MCA Universal contract artist.

"I admire him very much," David says of Martin. "He is one of the best performers I've ever seen in any country in any time. I saw him in LA and he absolutely blew the room apart. He's so amazing. It's a pleasure to record with him."

After his promo tour in the country, David will go back to California, where he is based, to spend the holidays with his family.

For sure, it will not take long before he'll be seen again in the country, which continues to patronize his beautiful music.

'Tatarin': Proud tradition of filmfest excellence

"IMORTAL" (1989). "Andres Manambit" (1992). "Ang Pagbabalik ni Pedro Penduko" (1994). "Muling Umawit ang Puso" (1995). "Bulaklak ng Maynila" (1999).

Those are Viva Films' entries to the annual Metro Manila Film Festival, all award winners, including best picture, and box-office hits.

In the proud tradition of filmfest excellence, Viva joins MMFF 2001 with "Tatarin," based on the play by National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin.

"Tatarin" is the most expensive movie in Viva's 20 years of existence, set in the '20s (American occupation), capturing the pagan fertility ritual "Tatarin."

The film gathers some of the biggest and brightest stars in Philippine cinema, artists, craftsmen, technicians, led by actors Dina Bonnevie and Edu Manzano, director Tikoy Aguiluz, and scriptwriter Ricky Lee.

Aside from Nick Joaquin, there is another National Artist in the title credit of "Tatarin," Lucresia Kasilag, who provided some of the music.

Dina and Edu play the Moreta couple, Doña Lupe and Don Paeng, trapped in a boring marriage despite three children. That is until Lupe joins the "Tatarin" ritual and turns into an enchantress, throbbing with passion. The heretofore macho (long before the word was used) Paeng literally kisses her feet in a humiliating surrender.

The aristocratic Dina was the original choice for the role of Lupe, even before Viva bought the rights to "Tatarin."

Dina requested Viva to cast Edu as Don Paeng, since the actor's *mestizo* looks and proud bearing suited the role well.

Also starring in "Tatarin" are Carlos Morales, Raymond Bagatsing, Patricia Javier and Rica Peralejo as Amada, the maid possessed by the spirit of "Tatarin," whose celebration coincides with the feast day of St. John the Baptist.

DIRECTOR Tikoy Aguiluz gives intructions to lead actress Dina Bonnevie on the set of "Tatarin."

Also in the cast are Daniel Fernando as the rebel Dodong; Kristine Jaca as the maid Rosa, sweetheart of Dodong; Ces Quesada as the liberated Micaela, the mother of Maggie; and JR Trinidad, Fytos Soriano and Hannah Camille Bustillos as the Moreta children.

Playing the parents of Don Paeng are Chin-Chin Gutierrez (flashback, herself a "Tatarin") and Tony Amador, top lawyer with acting talent, brother of noted stage director-actress Zeneida Amador.

"Tatarin" production design is by Dez Bautista, choreography by Edna Vida and cinematography by Ely Cruz.

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6	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
7	SUMMER CATCH
8	THE SCORE
9	EARTHQUAKE
10	2 PISNGI NG LANGIT
11	MONSTERS, INC
12	WOLF GIRL

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1	MONSTERS, INC
2	MUSKETEER
3	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
4	SUMMER CATCH
5	ROCKSTAR
6	HARRY POTTER
7	SERENDIPITY
8	THE SCORE
9	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
10	2 PISNGI NG LANGIT
11	EARTHQUAKE
12	WOLF GIRL

SM MEGAMALL
6331901 • 6329401

1	ROCKSTAR
2	MONSTERS, INC.
3	HARRY POTTER
4	SUMMER CATCH
5	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
6	THE SCORE
7	DREAM GIRL
8	EARTHQUAKE
9	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
10	MUSKETEER
11	2 PISNGI NG LANGIT
12	WOLF GIRL

SM TUTUBAN
2514302

1	SUMMER CATCH
2	EARTHQUAKE
3	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
4	WOLF GIRL

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452

1	WOLF GIRL
2	MUSKETEER
3	2 PISNGI NG LANGIT
4	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
5	EARTHQUAKE
6	THE SCORE
7	SUMMER CATCH
8	HARRY POTTER
9	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
10	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
11	MARKOVA (RI)
12	MONSTERS, INC

SM SOUTHMALL
8066888

1	EARTHQUAKE
2	THE SCORE
3	HARRY POTTER
4	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
5	2 PISNGI NG LANGIT
6	MONSTERS, INC
7	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
8	SUMMER CATCH
9	MUSKETEER
10	WOLF GIRL

SM GUADALUPE COMM'L
8820885

1	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
2	2 PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	EARTHQUAKE

SM CEBU
2313876

1	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
2	HARRY POTTER
3	JOY RIDE
4	GLITTER
5	KAPITAN AMBO
6	JEEPERS CREEPERS
7	THE SCORE

SM ILOILO
3209422

1	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
2	CLOSED
3	THE SCORE
4	JOY RIDE
5	JEEPERS CREEPERS
6	GLITTER
7	CLOSED
8	HARRY POTTER

SM PAMPANGA
7128015

1	HARRY POTTER
2	JOY RIDE
3	MUSKETEER
4	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
5	TIKIM
6	PAGDATING NG PANAHON

SM SUCAT
8294915

1	SUMMER CATCH
2	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
3	HARRY POTTER
4	PAGDATING NG PANAHON

SM DAVAO

1	HARRY POTTER
2	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
3	BUBBLE BOY
4	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
5	IRON LADIES
6	JEEPERS CREEPERS

dts DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

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GLORIETTA 1
formerly QUAD

1	SUMMER CATCH	in SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND
2	EARTHQUAKE	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	HARRY POTTER	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
4	THE MUSKETEER	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND

GLORIETTA 4

1	MONSTERS, INC.	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	THE SCORE	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	SUMMER CATCH THX	in DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	CINEMANILA	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	MVP: MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
6	HARRY POTTER	in DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
7	ROCKSTAR	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND

Art Film

GREENBELT

1	CINEMANILA	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	SUMMER CATCH	in SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND
3	CINEMANILA	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
4	REGINE AT THE MOVIES DEC. 15, 16, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30 Onstage	

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

1	SUMMER CATCH THX	in DSD/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
2	MVP: MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE	in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	THE SCORE	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	MONSTERS, INC.	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	HARRY POTTER	in DTS DIGITAL SOUND

MMTA
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MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS)	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
2 (SDDS)	MONSTER, INC.
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
4 GOLD (DTS)	ROCKSTAR
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	THE SCORE
6 GOLD (SDDS)	SUMMER CATCH
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	MUSKETEER
8	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
9	EARTHQUAKE
10	WOLF GIRL

Pearl Plaza Cinemas
(Parañaque) tel. 853.4486

1	
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3 (DTS)	DREAM GIRL
4	
5	
6 (DTS)	ROCKSTAR

Golden Pearl THX

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 831.6603

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
3	TALONG

starmall Movies
(Shaw Blvd.) tel 724.4986

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	WOLF GIRL
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MUSKETEER
5	TALONG

METROPOLIS star
543.3927 loc. 150

1	EARTHQUAKE
2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
5	HARRY POTTER
6	SUMMER CATCH
7	RESERVE
8	RESERVE

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 751.2011 to13

1	SUMMER CATCH

Center Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	HARRY POTTER

FCM FAIRVIEW CENTER MALL, INC.
tel 930.9515

1	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	REPLICANT

Spring
(Libertad, Pasay City) tel 831.7864

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
A	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1	ARAYYY
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
3	
4	

GOTESCO CINEMA

City
(Manila) tel 734.8588

1 (DOLBY)	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2	
3	
4	MUSKETEER
5	EARTHQUAKE
6	WOLF GIRL
7 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
8 (SDDS)	SUMMER CATCH
9 (DOLBY)	MVP

Caloocan
tel 362.3508

2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	WOLF GIRL
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4 (SDDS)	SUMMER CATCH
5	MUSKETEER
6 (DOLBY)	EARTHQUAKE
7 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
8	MVP
9	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1 (DTS)	SUMMER CATCH
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4	EARTHQUAKE
5 (SDDS)	WOLF GIRL
6	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
7 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER
8	RESERVE

Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
4	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
5 (SDDS)	MVP

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT

Sampaguita
(Cubao) tel 911.7888

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson
Lords
Jennet

THE MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	OPENS DEC. 25, 2001
2	OPENS DEC. 25, 2001
3	OPENS DEC 25 2001

Prima
(Pasig) tel 641.1215

3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY)	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	RESERVE
4	RESERVE
5	RESERVE

New Divisoria Mall
DIVISORIA CINEMA
tel 244.4619

1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
2	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
3	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
4	RESERVE
5	RESERVE
6	TALONG

Baclaran LRT
LRT CINEMA
tel 512.0115

1 (DOLBY)	
2	

Berma
tel 079.2029

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT

CitiMall
(Parañaque) tel 820.7269

1	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
2	SUMMER CATCH

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa Laguna)
tel (049) 534.2185 / 534.2198

1	ROCKSTAR
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	DREAM GIRL
2 (DTS)	ROCKSTAR
3 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER
4	JOY RIDE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	JEEPERS CREEPERS
2 (DOLBY)	ROCKSTAR
3 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
4	JOY RIDE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	HARRY POTTER
2	WEYT A MINIT
3	SOON 10 OPEN
4	SOON TO OPEN

Cinema 2000 MovieTown
(Tarlac)

1	MONSTERS, INC
2	-KAPITAN AMBO
3 (DOLBY)	KING OF GLADIATORS
4 (DTS)	JOY RIDE

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	EARTHQUAKE
2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
4 (DTS)	TALONG

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	ROCKSTAR
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
3 (DTS)	JOY RIDE
4	TALONG
5	KUMAKASA PUMUPUTOK

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	TALONG
2	ROCKSTAR
3	JEEPERS CREEPERS

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249-2568

1	HARRY POTTER
2	ROCKSTAR
3	IRON LADY

Olivarez Tagaytay
tel (046) 413.0311

1	KAPITAN AMBO
2	TIKIM
3	THE BODY

Morales Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.9736

1	ROCKSTAR
2	JOY RIDE
3	IRON LADY

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808

1 (DTS)	HAYOP SA SEX APPEAL
2 (DTS)	

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	KUMAKASA PUMUPUTOK
2	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
3	HARRY POTTER

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	KAPITAN AMBO
2	JOY RIDE
3	MONSTERS, INC
4	TIKIM

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY DI)	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
2	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
3	DON'T SAY A WORD
4 (DTS DI)	KAPITAN AMBO

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http://www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

GALLERIA
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1	HARRY POTTER
2	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
3	THE SCORE
4	ROCKSTAR
5	SUMMER CATCH
6	EARTHQUAKE
7	PISNGI
8	MUSKETEER
9	MONSTERS, INC.
10	WOLF GIRL

ERMITA
536-7609 TO 12

1	SUMMER CATCH
2	WOLF GIRL
3	EARTHQUAKE
4	THE SCORE
5	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
6	HARRY POTTER
7	MUSKETEER

METRO EAST
632-9115-16 / 633-7541

1	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
2	HARRY POTTER
3	THE SCORE
4	MONSTERS, INC.
5	MUSKETEER
6	WOLF GIRL
7	SUMMER CATCH
8	PISNGI

NOVALICHES
935 3229 TO 31

1	EARTHQUAKE
2	WOLF GIRL
3	SUMMER CATCH
4	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
5	ROCKSTAR
6	MUSKETEER
7	HARRY POTTER
8	MONSTERS, INC.

IMUS
(046) 471-0196

1	HARRY POTTER
2	EARTHQUAKE
3	SUMMER CATCH
4	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
5	PISNGI
6	MUSKETEER

BACOLOD
(034) 441-0453 / 0459

1	DON'T SAY A WORD
2	CAPT. CORRELLI'S
3	KING OF GLADIATORS
4	GLITTER
5	HARRY POTTER
6	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO

ILOILO
(033) 330-6077 / 6078

1	HARRY POTTER
2	JOY RIDE
3	JEEPERS CREEPERS
4	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
5	HARRY POTTER
6	JEEPERS CREEPERS

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

ARANETA CENTER THEATERS 911-3101	
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-2	SUTLA (RE-ISSUE)
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	MUSKETEER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	HARRY POTTER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	EARTHQUAKE
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	MVP
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7 (DOLBY)	SUMMER CATCH
FARMERS PLAZA-1 (DOLBY)	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
FARMERS PLAZA-2 (DOLBY)	PISNGI
FIESTA CARNIVAL	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
NEW FRONTIER	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	MARITAL RAPE / EROTIC DIARIES
ODEON	EARTHQUAKE
ODEON-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
ROBEN	PISNGI
TANDEM-1	SEX MEDUSA
TANDEM-2	SEX EDUCATION
TIMES	PUKYUTAN / STORY OF US
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
CORONET-2	ORIGINAL SIN
QUEZON-1	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
REMAR	PISNGI
REMAR-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	DALAWANG PISNGI
B	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
C	SUTLA (RI)
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-2	SUMMER CATCH
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	ROCKSTAR
CINEMA-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
CINEMA-3	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE SCORE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	MONSTER, INC
CINEMA-6	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
CINEMA-7	SUTLA (RI)
CINEMA-8	PISNGI
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	SUMMER CATCH
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	EARTHQUAKE
CINEMA-12	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
CINEMA-14	MUSKETEER
CINEMA-15	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
LORES	
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-3	CLOSED
POWER PLANT CINEMA	
CINEMA-1	THE MUSKETEER
CINEMA-2	MONSTERS, INC
CINEMA-3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-4	SUMMER CATCH
CINEMA-5	SERENDIPITY
CINEMA-6	THE SCORE
UNIWIDE METROMALL	
(LAS PIÑAS)	
CINEMA-1	
CINEMA-2	
CINEMA-4	
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	
CINEMA-1	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
CINEMA-2	THE OTHER SIDE OF LOVE
CINEMA-4	ALAMID

GEISLER. Image model

Wacky Studio opens in Laguna

WACKY Clothing Studio, the hottest teen wear, goes all out this year with its advertising campaign, "Get Into the Fun of Life."

Wacky has been associated with the adventurous and spirited nature of the youth. Now, it focuses its campaigns on the values that characterize today's teen and young adults.

To reflect the varying lifestyle of today's youth, top young stars Baron Geisler, Carlos Agassi, LJ Moreno, Kaye Abad and Desiree del Valle signed up as Wacky's image models.

Recently, Baron Geisler led the ribbon-cutting ceremony of Wacky Clothing Studio's newest outlet at Walter Mart in Calamba, Laguna.

Baron also treated his fans to an engaging performance that sent the teenage girls screaming their hearts out.

At 18, Baron has achieved much in his young life. Being one of the highly visible stars of ABS-CBN's pool of talents, he is now considered a heartthrob and matinee idol.

Wacky Clothing Studio's retail outlets also highlight a fresh, hip and exuberant ambiance with its colorful display of shirts and pants for mens and ladies.

Life-size photographs of the image models add color and life to the over-all look of the store.

Wacky Clothing Studio is available in various cities in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Kevin Costner starrer

FIVE big stars have joined together in a giant action film that is set to thrill audiences, particularly Elvis Presley fans.

"3000 Miles to Graceland" topbills Kevin Costner, Kurt Russell, Courtney Cox, Christian Slater and David Arquette.

Now on video, it is released by C-Interactive Digital Entertainment in VHS and VCD copies.

The story unfolds when the 2001 International Elvis competition was held in Las Vegas. While everybody was thinking of grabbing the most coveted award, five other men were there with only one purpose in mind, to get filthy rich.

The men are dressed to the nines as flawless Elvis impersonators and armed with ammunitions and electronic gadgets enough to scare even the most sophisticated army.

With a wild, twisting plot and a soundtrack by George Clinton, the film is a non-stop rollicking ride.

Interested parties may call the Customer Care Hotline at 245-5011 or 12 (Manila), 032-412-1948 (Cebu) and 082-221-0405 (Davao).

Boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: I hear you are involved with two women these days. I didn't know you were a playboy! Are they both from show biz?

Starlet: No, don't believe them—*alam mo naman sa* show biz, it's all hear or say!

(Put them together and you get —? Bingo!)

***

Host: Why did you not stay long in the government service?

Guest: I wanted to, but they told me I was lacking in qualifications.

Host: What did you lack?

Guest: I was not civil service legible!

(Maybe you can improve your penmanship?)

***

Host: What can you say to answer the changes that have been raised against you?

Guest: Nothing will happen, because they are only meddling the issue.

(Ah, so . . .)

***

Host: *Isa kang tunay na bayani! Biro mo, na*save *mo lahat ng tao na yan sa sunog? Ano'ng ginawa mo?*

Guest: Presence of mind lang. *Nung nakita ko ang sunog, kinuha ko agad ang* fly extinguisher!

(You put out the fire with a—fly swatter?!)

***

Host: Your career is doing well this year! What's the reason?

Guest: Maybe, my change of image?

Host: ah, yes, you are doing daring roles these days. Did you have a hard time making the shift?

Guest: *Sa umpisa lang.*

Host: How do you manage it? Are you conscious when you're doing sexy scenes?

(No, they have to knock me out first!)

***

Host: How long does it take to prepare this fish dish? How long should the fish be cooked?

Guest cook: Fish should be cooked until it's cooked!

(Thanks, you've been a big help!)

***

Host: Will we ever see the solution of this very controversial case?

Guest: If we can get new leads and witnesses, yes.

Host: what's the next step?

Guest: We have to decide on whether or not we can file unnecessary charges on this case.

(Unnecessary charges?!)

***

Host: Our spy at the party says he saw you being very romantic with each other!

Guest: No, we're just friends!

Host: But you escorted her to the party?

Guest: No, we just accidentally mate there.

(Tell us more about your "accidental mating"!)

***

Host: *At ngayon, ang taya ng panahon. Kumusta na ang* weather *bukas?*

Weather girl: *Umaasa tayo ng malakas na ulan bukas!*

(*Baka ikaw, umaasa—Kami, hindi!*)

***

"LITTLE Brown Man in San Francisco," a short documentary telecast on "The Probe Team" earlier this year, has been invited for screening at the 20th annual San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival next March.

Directed, shot and edited by **Howie Severino**, the 19-minute film focuses on "Tatang" **Floro Bagasala** and other Pinoy World War II veterans who have migrated to the USA.

The film's part of Severino's set of short movies about the Filipino American community that he shot in 1999 as a Documentary Fellow at Pusod, the Filipino American center for culture and ecology in Berkeley, California.

A previous film by Severino, "Return to the Tribe," was screened at the Yamagata International Documentary Festival in Japan and the San Diego Asian American Film Festival.

PERALEJO. Flaunts her sensuous charms as the La Tondeña "girl" for 2002.

Rica in sexy poses for liquor calendar

SEXY actress Rica Peralejo has been chosen as La Tondeña's calendar girl for 2002.

In a series of tastefully executed photos done by master lensman Raymund Isaac, the strongest contender to the "boldest actress" throne flaunts her sensuous charms and reaffirms her stature as one of local showbiz's hottest items.

Shot in various scenic spots in Boracay, the five-photo calendar series is another major triumph for the multi-talented Rica, who essays yet another memorable role in Tikoy Aguiluz's "Tatarin," Viva Films' official entry to this year's Metro Manila Film Festival.

By next year, Rica has her schedule all planned out for the course of her career. Aside from upcoming films coupled with recording and performing stints here and abroad, Rica also has her calendar full as the 2002 ambassadress of La Tondeña Distillers.

La Tondeña Distillers marketing team sees the 2002 calendar series as a very effective promotional tool.

"Rica was our unanimous choice for next year's calendar because she exemplifies the best traits we look for in our models," says La Tondeña marketing manager Ramon S. Reyes.

The calendars feature Rica in a five-page spread with the notable brands of La Tondeña Distillers highlighted on each, showcasing daring and sexy, yet tastefully done poses that emphasize each of the brand's qualities.

The brands are Vino Kulafu, San Miguel Bravo Rum, GSM Blue and Ginebra San Miguel.

Aside from the bigger calendars which will be distributed to La Tondeña's major dealers and wholesalers, a pocket-sized version will also be available to the public starting Jan. 1.

In the past beautiful faces have also graced the La Tondeña calendar, including Amanda Page, Rufa Mae Quinto, Michelle Aldana, Janna Victoria, Patricia Javier and Geneva Cruz.

Pre-Christmas bliss in Roxas City and Boracay

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

JUST this once, allow me to veer away from the usual topic of my column. We are all caught up in the holiday frenzy so who would give a hoot about show biz intrigues right now?

Besides with all the office gossip during Christmas parties, I guess you've had more than your fill. This column serves as my holiday break from show biz stuff.

I'd like to take you with me as I recapture the pre-Christmas bliss I had in Roxas City and Boracay.

The Lions Club of Capiz invited **Bojo Molina** and I to host their annual Mutya Sang Sinadya sa Halaran beauty pageant. (Sinadya meaning merry-making. Halaran means offering) From the moment we landed, it was non-stop partying and pigging out. Thanks to Lions' *muy simpatico* president **Bong Albar**, his lovely wife **Denden** and Lions' ever-reliable PRO **Arnel Estiaga** for making us feel like royalty.

Roxas is known as the seafood capital. For an oyster addict like me, Roxas is the place to be. For as low as P20, you already have a mound of fresh huge oysters. I even found some oysters that were bigger than my palm.

Oysters

I can easily consume a sackful of oysters if I want to. Not that I need an aphrodisiac. Oysters in Roxas are devoid of all the fancy garnishings they use in oyster bars here in Manila.

Another case of complicating the simplest of things once it's brought to the big city.

What a rip-off! We were billeted at The President's Inn, located in the heart of Roxas City's Plaza. It's a charming and quaint place, just a stone's throw away from a favorite hangout of barhoppers, The Cubicle.

Roxas is also known as the garden of Panay. Spending time in the province makes me yearn for such a stress-free life. Capizenos, just like Ilonggos, radiate warmth with their endearing Hiligaynon accent. What an infectious zest for life they've got!

Bojo was a real trooper! He hardly slept the night before and he had to wait six hours for his delayed flight. But he still gamely joined me in the motorcade under the scorching heat. He even gave in to the clamor of teachers to make a "campus tour."

During the pageant, he serenaded the candidates. We got so engrossed with our hosting that we hardly noticed it was almost midnight. Through it all, I never heard him complain or saw him frown. What's more, he did it all *gratis et amore*.

It's good to know that there are friends like Bojo whom I can count on even when there is no money to count.

Paradise island

From Roxas, we took a three-hour drive to Boracay.

It's been 5 years since I last visited the paradise island. It was Bojo's first time! Little did we know that the boat we took to the island was the last trip for the next two days because Typhoon "Qaeda" was raging on. Talk about being stranded in an island! Luckily, Bojo and I had our significant others (**Anna** and **Rico**) to keep us warm. I particularly enjoyed getting drenched in the rain as we hunted for bargains in the *talipapa*.

The best buy I got are the colorful lanterns of all shapes and sizes (P25 each for the smallest size. They sell it for P100 in the *tiangges* here.)

Bojo finally found an authentic shark's tooth that he has always wanted to have. Burying my feet in the pristine white sand sure beats freezing in the snow a few Christmases ago.

I prefer the Boracay version of a "white Christmas" We stayed at Red Coconut. I could spend eternity just standing in the terrace of our hotel room gazing at the beach.

Boracay has changed much although its splendor is something not even all the commercial establishments can ever take away.

Next time you go to Boracay, I recommend that you eat at Caribo (an acronym for Caribbean and Boracay). The owner **Edgar Mercado** and his friend **Nikki** will make you feel instantly at home.

Exotically good

You must try Caribo's seafood skewers with cinnamon curry rice topped with peach salsa or their grilled chicken marinated in jerk rub from bermuda with coco corn sauce, to name a few.

Everything in their menu is exotically good! And if you want to party check, out Bazzura, which has now been improved. What with the expert handling of former Planet Mars staff **Kat Tan** and **Alvin Barbasa**.

Party guru Jay Server surely trained them well. Bojo and I were ribbing each other to try Cocomanga's "Still Standing After 15" shots and Summer Place's "Shooters," so that our names will be etched in the wall of fame. But our good sense prevailed. We were naturally high anyway, so what's the point in getting intoxicated?

Another cool place to party the night away in Boracay is Hey Jude. Island folk fondly refer to it as their own Venezia.

Boat ride

The highlight of my trip was the boat ride to Puka Beach and Island Cove. I have a phobia for the beach because I almost drowned when I was a kid. I finally conquered my fear. There we were right in the middle of nowhere, amidst gusty winds and heavy downpour.

I didn't have much of a choice but to sit still and just pray. As soon as we got to Puka Beach, the rains stopped and a rainbow appeared. It was one of the most breathtaking moments I ever had.

Friends who saw my picture of that rainbow scene thought it was just a camera trick. Right that moment, I felt the essence of Christmas. Suddenly, all the storms I'm facing in my life right now seem to fade away.

Christmas reminds me that faith and hope are freely given by our Savior the whole year round. All we have to do is to take it. That's all it really takes. But how can we receive it if we are still holding on to our heavy emotional load?

May you all have an overdose of faith and hope this Christmas.

Remember to share. That's a Christ-must.

For feedback, e-mail wateringhole2000@yahoo.com

Backstreet Boys discoverer launches boy band

LOU Pearlman, legendary star-maker and mastermind of the boy-band phenomenon, is at it again.

After putting Backstreet Boys, 'N sync, LFO and MTV/ABC's "Making the Band" TV show featuring O-Town on the world music map, the Trans Continental Records CEO (affectionately called "Big Poppa") introduces the next fab five to hit it big, Natural.

The group is set to conquer the hearts of Filipinos with a series of campus and mall tours in February 2002.

Lou's latest discovery is comprised of five young talents—Ben Bledsoe, "J" Josh Horn, Michael Johnson, Patrick King, Jr. and Marc Terenzi. Natural's first single, "Put Your Arms Around Me," charted the Billboard Hot 100 Singles sales chart and was certified gold last September. To date, the single has sold over 600,000 copies and is currently playing in select radio stations in Metro Manila.

Natural vows to put the "band" back into boy-band as each of its members plays his own musical instrument—from the electric guitar, bass and drums to keyboards, violin and sax—while showcasing their five-part harmonies and dance moves.

They're more Beatles than Backstreet, but they're definitely influenced by both and at the same time have their own unique pop-rock flavor.

Lou was the one who brought back the boy-band craze just when alternative music was phasing it out.

A native of Flushing, Queens, New York, Lou took up the guitar at age 8 and has music icon and first cousin Art Garfunkel as his role model. He also had his own band, Flyer, which did front acts for such artists as Kool and the Gang, Donna Summer, and Gloria Gaynor, among others.

After much research and attending NKOTB concerts, Lou and a couple of friends organized an audition for a new group.

Over the course of seven months in 1993, Lou struck it big with Nick, Howie, Kevin, AJ and Brian—collectively known as the Backstreet Boys. With over 60 million records sold worldwide, Trans Continental Records became one of the major players in the music scene.

Lou's boy-band formula continued to hit the mark with 'Nsync, who has also sold millions of albums globally.

Today, Lou continues to weave his magic touch. Aside from Natural, his stable of talents includes C-Note, LFO, Take Five, Lugo and many others.

He has a sprawling $6-million recording studio that doubles as a training camp for future pop icons in Orlando, Florida, which he called O-Town (also the name of his other hot boy-band discovery).

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VENUE	DEC. 17	DEC. 18	DEC. 19	DEC. 20
GREENBELT 1	Bangkok Dangerous (Thailand)	Farinelli (Belgium)	The King Is Dancing (Belgium)	No Man's Land (Belgium)
GREENBELT 2	The Isle (Korea)	Divided We Fall (Czech Republic)	Otesanek (Czech Republic)	Detector (Norway)
GREENBELT 3	Happy End (Korea)	Beau Travail (France)	Under The Sand (France)	The Price of Milk (New Zealand)
GLORIETTA 4	CINEMANILA 2001 AWARD WINNERS (To be announced)			

For more details, pls call Cinemanila secretariat at 881-6782 & 882-3935;
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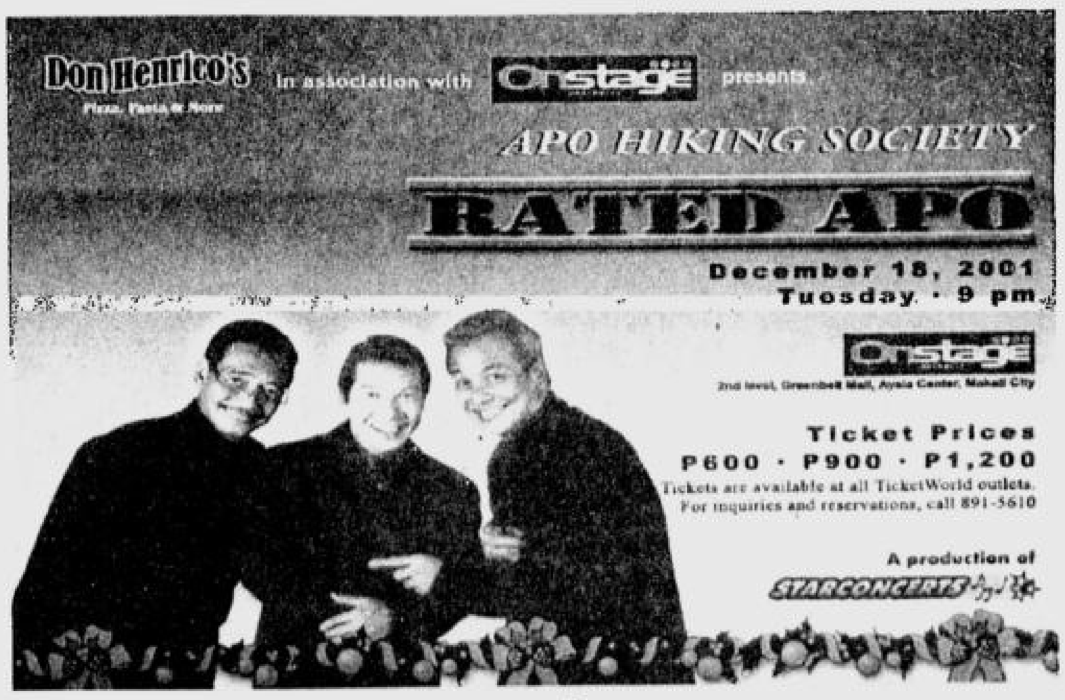
SUMMER CATCH - P 13 12:50, 3:20, 5:40, 7:55, 10:10	SERENDIPITY - P 13 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:30	THE SCORE - R 18 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

Matinee, P80, Mon.-Fri.,11:00 am to 4:45 pm Screenings, Free Seating.



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ENTERTAINMENT

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

Songbird continues to make beautiful music

By Remy M. Umerez

RUMOR has it that songbird Regine Velasquez is moving to ABS-CBN.

The truth came out in a press conference on the 3rd floor of the Viva Group of Companies building.

To begin with, Regine said, she has no written contract with GMA 7. She said she also enjoys her stint at SOP. For Regine, working on the show is like going on a holiday—away from such heavy commitments as concert shows, recording and making movies.

"About five months ago, I had a meeting with Freddie Garcia and Charo Santos about a show they had in mind, with Martin and me as hosts," Regine said. "I was of course flattered but I have to be very careful about my career moves. I am not sure I can cope with the responsibility of hosting a new show. We did not touch talent fees, *kaya* foul *na sabihing mukha akong pera.*

"I told them I can't leave SOP right away because, as I've said, I am still enjoying it. It relaxes me. *Para lang akong nakikipag-tsikahan 'sa mga* fans. It also affords me to show off my new clothes. SOP is good therapy. I favor the idea that I appear in one spot number only."

But on her talk with Garcia and Santos, Regine said that she "never heard anything from them again after the first meeting."

Regine admitted that some time ago, she harbored ill feelings for ABS-CBN (that lasted for two years), but she refused to discuss the details.

Recently, critics snapped at Regine and called her "package queen." Reportedly, it was because Regine pushed for a "package deal" for her and her brother-in-law Raul Mitra (husband of sister Cacai Velasquez) in every movie transaction.

"I recommended him (Raul) for 'Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw' to do the music score because I know he is good at it. I see nothing wrong in that. Furthermore, we grew up helping our own relatives. It is a way of life among Filipinos.

"(Raul) is on his own already because he has proven his worth. He was the personal choice of Joyce Bernal to score 'Buhay Kamao.' That is not my movie. He also scored 'Cool Dudes' for Regal."

Her loyalty to Viva is beyond question. She kidded she is under exclusive contract with Viva for the next 50 years, both in movies and recording.

"Nobody dared and gambled to make me a movie star but Boss Vic. I am not complaining, but he was the only one who spent time and effort on me. I am grateful for that because I did not even dream of having a career making movies."

She is currently working on a movie tentatively called "Hanggang Ngayon" with Richard Gomez. The movie is bound to become another hit. A cut in the soundtrack was composed by Ogie Alcasid, who also did "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw" and "Pangako Ikaw Lang." Yam Laranas directed the movie which will hit the cinemas on Feb. 14, 2002.

VELASQUEZ. Enjoys success in both recording and the movies.

After Richard, Regine said she will like to work with Cesar Montano in her next movie.

She doesn't mind if Judy Ann Santos is crowned this year's box-office queen. She is happy with the thought that her movies with Robin and Aga were blockbuster hits.

"My joy is tripled because I made millions of moviegoers happy, too," she said. "Whoever wins the title is fine with me."

As the year ends, Regine is set to release a new album simply called "Regine," where she pays tribute to the country's talented pop songwriters with 17 new originals.

Cuts in the album include: "Nasa Puso Ko" by Moy Ortiz and Edith Gallardo; "Dadalhin" by Tats Faustino, "Free Spirits" by Noel Mendez, "Sa Aking Pag-iisa" by Janno Gibbs, "Nang Makita Ko" by Viktoria, "What You Are To Me" by Reuben Laurente and Markel Luna, and "Tayong Dalawa" by Trina Belamide.

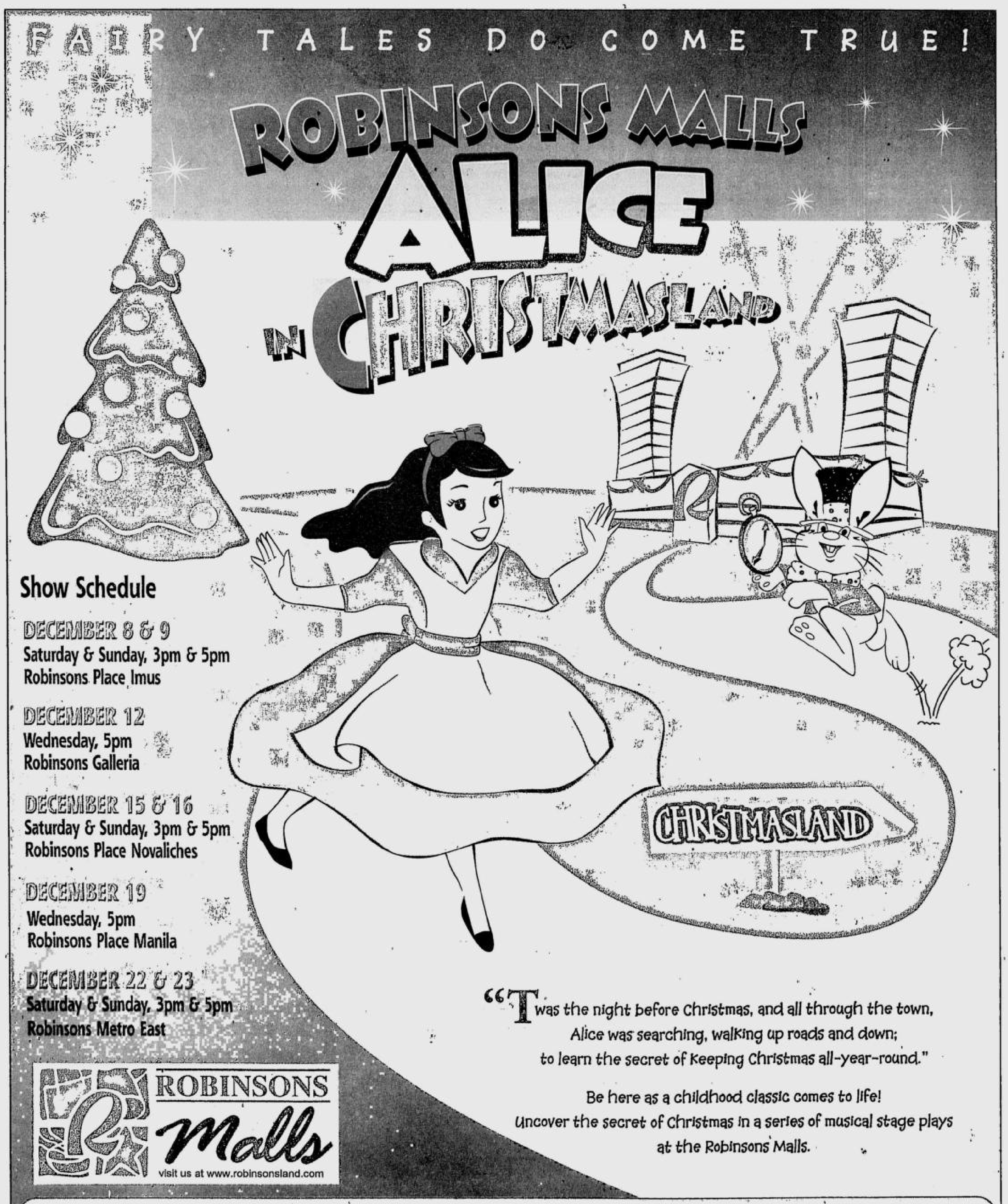
Emerging as the carrier single and a potential hit is "To Reach You," a love ballad composed by Lisa Dy and Chat Zamorá. The only non-Pilipino song is "Love On the Airwaves" by Chris Thompson and Robert Watson.

The songs are purely pop. It has the usual slow ballads, with some sexy cuts, and a dash of rock.

This is Regine's first studio album in two years. Her last was the multiplatinum-selling hit "R2K," followed by the album soundtrack "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw," the live recording "Songbird Sings the Classics," and the soundtrack of another huge box-office hit "Pangako Ikaw Lang."

As a bonus, the album comes in a special package containing lots of playful, sexy, and exciting photos of Regine, captured through the lens of Jun de Leon.

In January, Regine will be on the road promoting her album at the following venues: Jan. 10 she will be at SM Iloilo, Jan. 11 at SM Cebu, and Jan. 12 at SM Davao.



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DECEMBER 8 & 9
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DECEMBER 12
Wednesday, 5pm
Robinsons Galleria

DECEMBER 15 & 16
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Robinsons Place Novaliches

DECEMBER 19
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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2001

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

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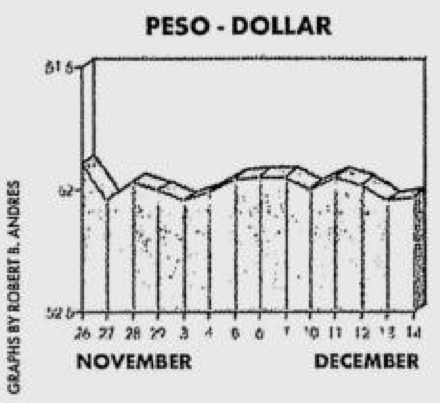


Peso-Dollar Rate

₱ 52.03 = $1

As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 14, 2001

¥ 127.88 = $1

As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 17, 2001

GOLD:$277.60/278.50

per ounce Hong Kong,
Dec. 17, 2001

By CLARISSA S. BATINO

HIGHER local and foreign borrowings of the government in September pushed the country's debt stock in the first nine months of the year to P2.32 trillion, up 14.1 percent from P2.035 trillion last year.

On a month-on-month basis, the level of debts soared by P37.6 billion in September alone or by 1.6 percent compared with the previous month as local borrowings soared by P22.4 billion or by 1.9 percent while external debts went up by P15.2 billion or 1.4 percent.

Deputy National Treasurer Jose Tan said that aside from increased borrowings from the local and foreign markets during the month of September, the local currency was also weaker during the first nine months compared with the same period last year.

Although the government's foreign loans were limited to about $500 million this year, a little over $200 million in fresh loans were sealed in August and could have been reflected in the numbers a month later.

Of the total debt stock from January to September, local debts amounted to P1.134 trillion and the rest were foreign loans, of which 57.4 percent were in US dollars, 35.4 percent in Japanese Yen, and the rest in other currency, data from the Bureau of Treasury showed.

Of the total, domestic debt totaled P1.187 trillion, up 15.2 percent year-on-year, while foreign debt amounted to P1.134 trillion, up 12.9 percent.

It said the total debt was composed of 20.1 percent in short-term liabilities, 15.1 percent in medium-term liabilities and 64.8 percent in long-term liabilities.

The actual level of the government's foreign and local borrowings as of September did not include contingent debts of about P494 billion, an amount 7.4 percent higher than the year-ago level of P460 billion and 1.6 percent more than the previous month's P486 billion.

These are borrowings that the government assumes each time government agencies and even private sector firms that availed themselves of sovereign-backed loans fail to pay their obligations.

If the estimated level of contingent debts become actual, the level of the nine-month debt stock would soar to P2.815 trillion. This amount would be higher by 12.8 percent compared with last year's and 1.6 percent more than the month-ago level.

From an average of P51.20 to a dollar in August, the peso remained stable, which should not have made repayment of dollar obligations during the period more burdensome.

Compared with last year's exchange rate, however, the peso still registered a weaker level as of September, according to Tan.

The debt stock released by the Treasury included the government's local and foreign borrowings. The figure does not include, however, the liabilities of the private sector unlike the debt stock statistics from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The debt stock this year naturally went up following the Macapagal administration's heavy dependence on domestic borrowings to finance a P145-billion budget deficit expected this year.

Unlike in previous years when foreign borrowings usually come in during the first half of the year, the Macapagal administration relied solely on local sources this year to take advantage of declining interest rates.

Most of the foreign loans this year were sealed during the third and fourth quarters and the amount that could reach $750 million would be used to finance next year's requirements.

The government borrows about P7 billion weekly from the private sector by issuing treasury bills and bonds.

Of the P173 billion in funds to be borrowed this year, close to 80 percent was to be sourced from the local financial market. Next year, the government said it would bring up the percentage of the foreign borrowings to almost half the required amount of P113 billion.

A government official pointed out that treasury bill rates, particularly the benchmark 91-day rate, continued to trade at single-digit levels, giving the government cheaper access to funds.

Relief for airlines pushed

THE AIR Transportation Office (ATO) said it would be asking Congress to grant local airlines certain discounts as well as tax rebates to help them cope with the rising costs of operations and with new requirements set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (Icao).

ATO chief Adelberto Yap said in a news briefing last week that he would be presenting a proposal to Congress before it closes for the year for airlines to be given a 25-percent discount on parking and landing fees as well as fuel tax waivers or rebates.

He said the Icao had given airlines all over the world 18 months beginning November to upgrade and restructure their cockpits to comply with tighter security standards brought by the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the United States.

"The cockpit has to be completely closed, isolated and bullet-proof. This would be kept locked and nobody can just go in and out of the cockpit. It would have a special key that not all flight attendants would have access to," he said.

On top of that, Yap said airlines would also be required to install closed-circuit television sets on all their aircraft.

"These would be used to look at what's happening on the plane. A flight attendant could closely monitor everything that is happening on the plane just by viewing the monitor," he explained.

Yap admitted that these added security measures would entail a huge amount for the airlines, which was why he wanted to implement the discounts and the tax rebates that would help alleviate the airlines' cost of operations.

"In some countries, they already waive parking and landing fees to assist the aviation industry. Since we couldn't do that here yet, we could at least subsidize our airlines," he said.

₱12-B MIXED-USED DEV'T

Megaworld joins Boni project

By DORIS C. DUMLAO

PREMIER property developer Megaworld Corp. is working out a P12-billion joint venture with the group of businessman Carlos Rufino to develop a five-hectare property inside the Fort Bonifacio Global City.

INQUIRER sources disclosed that the project envisions a mixed-use development similar to Megaworld's Eastwood City in Libis or the Lopezes' Rockwell Center in Makati, with rows of restaurants, retail outlets, entertainment centers, and residential and commercial developments.

They said the P12-billion project was targeted for completion within the next two to three years.

The sources said Megaworld had agreed to come in as a joint developer with Rufino's group, which had secured the lot for the project from Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. for about P2.5 billion. Rufino is likewise quitting by year's end his post as senior vice president of FBDC to focus on the project —called the Bonifacio Compound—which was originally earmarked for residential development.

FBDC is the joint venture formed by the Metro Pacific Corp.-led Bonifacio Land Co. (BLC) and state-controlled Bases Conversion Development Authority in 1995 to develop the former Fort Bonifacio military base.

To date, however, the sources said Megaworld and other members of the consortium were still negotiating on the equity sharing for the P12-billion project.

For its part, the sources said Megaworld planned to put up 12 to 15 residential towers within the property, most of them with a view of the Manila Golf course.

It would be the first foray of Andrew Tan's flagship unit into the 150-hectare Fort Bonifacio Global City and the sources said the property developer was scouting for other opportunities.

"Megaworld is looking at more developments. More deals are being worked out inside Fort Bonifacio," a source said.

MEGAWORLD/ B2

Investments in RP ecozones down 57% at ₱30B

By GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.

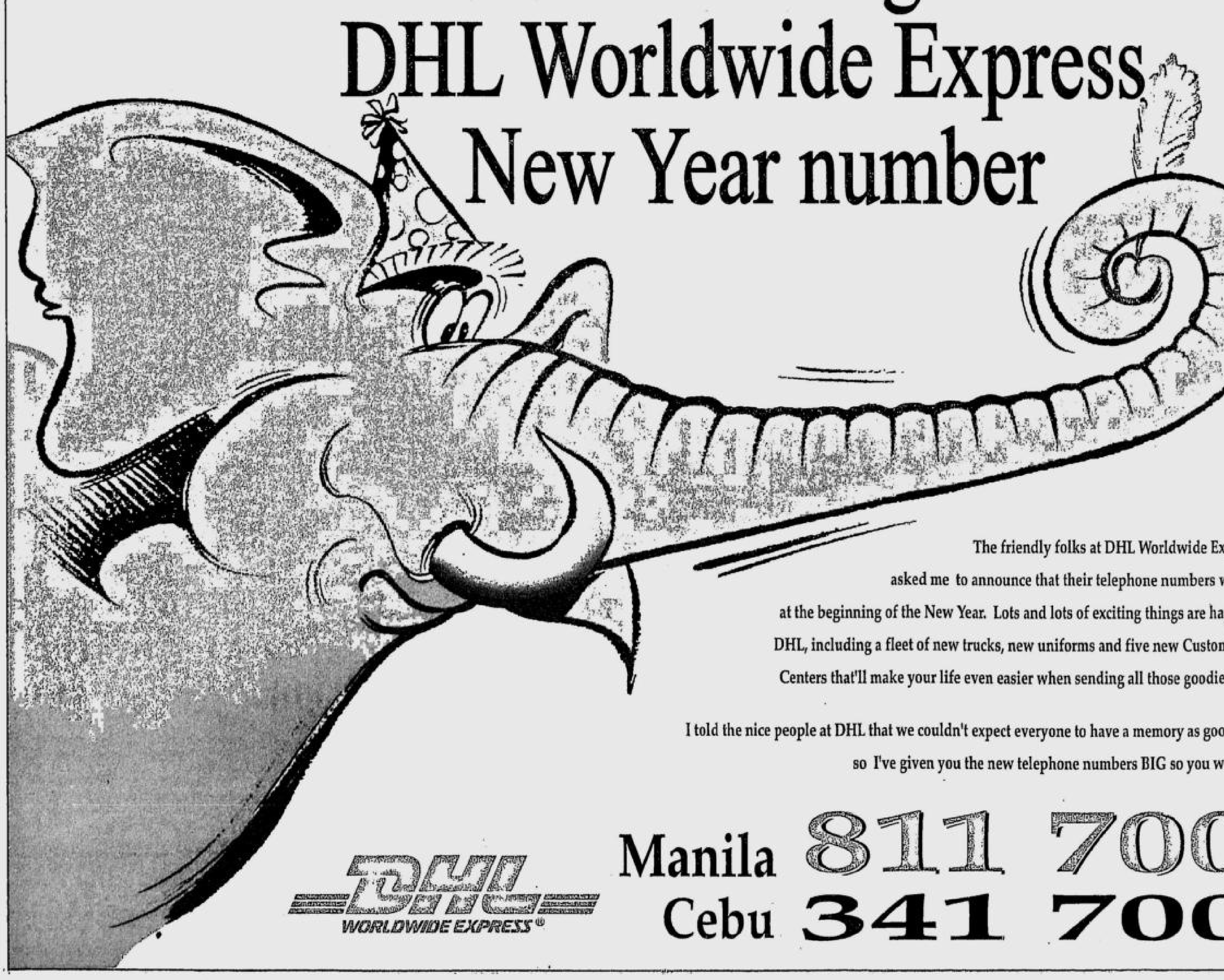
INVESTMENTS in government and private-owned industrial estates have shrunk by more than half in the first 11 months this year, reflecting the steep drop in export growth due to the economic slowdown in the United States and Japan.

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority reported that investments fell 57 percent to P30.4 billion from January to November this year from P71.1 billion during the same period last year. At this pace, Peza is expected to hit a five-year low this year.

This year's batch of Peza projects are expected to generate 41,106 new jobs and $3.8 billion in new export earnings.

New export enterprises nosedived 63 percent to

INVESTMENTS/ B2



Please don't forget the DHL Worldwide Express New Year number

The friendly folks at DHL Worldwide Express have asked me to announce that their telephone numbers will change at the beginning of the New Year. Lots and lots of exciting things are happening at DHL, including a fleet of new trucks, new uniforms and five new Customer Service Centers that'll make your life even easier when sending all those goodies overseas.

I told the nice people at DHL that we couldn't expect everyone to have a memory as good as mine, so I've given you the new telephone numbers BIG so you won't forget!

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NSC lessee needs at least ₱1B to reopen steel giant

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry wants the prospective leaseholder of National Steel Corp. to have P1 billion in funds or available financing in order to ensure its capability to undertake the multibillion-peso rehabilitation and reopening of the steel company's shuttered plant in Iligan.

The DTI is head of the evaluation committee that reviews the lease offers submitted by Cathay Pacific Steel Co., Allengoal Steel Fabrication Trading Co. and Voest Alpine of Austria for NSC.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II said the new investor of NSC would need at least half a billion pesos just to reopen NSC's facilities which have been closed since November 1999 due to the steel company's failure to meet mounting loan obligations worth P16 billion.

Roxas said another P300 million to P500 million would be needed for the working capital to be used primarily to buy raw materials and resume NSC's operations.

While the terms of reference required bidders to have at least P1 billion in financial backing, Roxas said none of them complied with this requirement. He said that as far as he was concerned, he preferred that the committee be flexible in demanding this requirement.

"It could be less than P1 billion and not all of it should be in cash as some can come in the form of a credit line with a bank. Let's be flexible because a billion of peso is hard to come by these days," Roxas said. He said the bankers had supported the DTI's position on the cash bond requirement and other stakeholders in the review process, notably Danaharta and Hottick-Renong, concurred.

Capasco, Allengoal and Voest Alpine have asked the committee for more time to submit documents to flesh out their respective offers.

The three prospective NSC bidders were supposed to submit all the pertinent documents on Dec. 10 but they requested for an extension up to Dec. 19 to meet the requirements.

The extension is expected to push back the NSC committee's self-imposed deadline to make its choice before the end of this year, a development that would also push back NSC's targeted reopening much later next year.

Based on its proposal, Capasco will tap USX Engineers & Consultants Inc. and China Steel Corp. for the local steel firm's proposed P2-billion, five-year rehabilitation program for NSC.

Allengoal, for its part, will tie up with Hatch Associates in its offer to lease the facilities for two years at P20.5 million per month plus a 40-percent share in the steel company's net profit.

Voest Alpine did not submit a lease-rehabilitate-operate proposal but instead offered to run the plant in partnership with NSC.

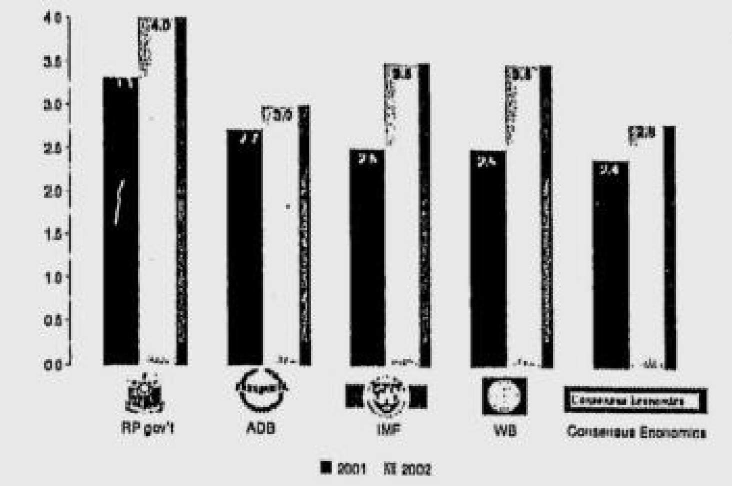
Voest Alpine proposed to spend 1.176 million euros for the first-phase of the rehabilitation of NSC's facilities. It offered to spend another 20.58 million euros to improve NSC's operations by broadening its product range and improving the company's production and quality systems.

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Comparative RP growth forecast

(2001 & 2002, in percent)



Source: Asian Development Bank's "Asia Economic Report"

WHILE international organizations downgraded their growth forecasts for the Philippines, the government kept its 3.3 percent and 4 percent growth projections for 2001 and 2002, respectively. Aside from the global economic slowdown, Asian Development Bank also cited sluggish private investments, low tax collections, narrowing trade surplus and rising net capital outflows as reasons for the lowering growth projections.

Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

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Camp John Hay Golf	250,000
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Club Filipino	210,000
Eagle Ridge A	330,000
Manila Golf (Indv.) & Corp	13M/14M
Manila Polo	2.740M
Manila Southwoods "A/B"	625,000/800
Metropolitan "A"	100,000
Mt. Malarayat "A"	390/500,000
Orchard "A/C"	230/350,000
Philippine Columbian	80,000
Quezon City Sports A/B	220,000/210,000
Riviera "A"	160,000
Rockwell Club	380,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,575,000
Tagaytay Highland Club	360,000
Tagaytay Midland	650,000
Valle Verde CC	165,000
Valley Golf	230,000
Wack Wack	6.5 M

BUYING:

Alabang "A/B"	1.450 M/1.5 M
Baguio Country Club	720,000
Camp John Hay Golf	250,000
Canlubang Golf	850,000
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Capitol Hills	115,000
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NBC shelves DTH satellite TV plan

By Abigail L. Ho

NATION Broadcasting Corp., affiliate of dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., has suspended a plan to operate a direct-to-home satellite television service pending the completion of cable televisions Home Cable-SkyCable merger.

"We want to make sure first how far DTH will fit into the idea of convergence," PLDT president and chief executive Manuel Pangilinan said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

NBC filed with the National Telecommunications Commission on May 30 an application to operate a DTH satellite television service in the country.

An NTC source said that NBC might not have a hard time acquiring a license since it would already be the fifth player in the DTH market.

The NTC, however, has yet to give the broadcasting company its license. Pangilinan, however, said he would rather wait it out and see how the merger of Home Cable with the Lopezes' SkyCable would work before making his next move.

Although DTH satellite TV service is a lot more expensive than cable TV, he said the two would still be competing for the same client base.

He added that, based on the United States experience, more people opted to go for the DTH satellite TV service because it was hassle-free.

"Between DTH and cable television, the US experience showed that the market go for DTH because it does not use wire," Pangilinan said.

He believed, however, that the country still needed to develop the DTH industry as it was not yet that big compared with other broadcast industries.

He added that, with the development of the DTH industry in the Philippines, there would be not much room for too many operators for the industry to thrive.

"I think there's room for only one DTH provider in the country," he said emphasizing that this was not because there had to be a monopoly for the industry to flourish.

He cited the case of the cable TV industry in which a number of players put up operations but not a single company has made substantial profit since the late 1990s.

Because of this, the two biggest cable TV operators in the country, Home Cable and SkyCable, were forced to merge their operations.

Groups endorse DoF chief's confirmation

SEVERAL business groups, in separate letters to the Commission on Appointments, have endorsed the confirmation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho's appointment.

These groups include the member-brokers of the Philippine Stock Exchange, the Metro Bacolod Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Batangas Province Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"In support of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the member-brokers of the Philippine Stock Exchange fully endorse the confirmation of Jose Isidro Camacho as Secretary of Finance," wrote 31 PSE member-brokers led by PSE director Vivian Yuchengco and William Ang of Astra Securities.

"We recognize that the country needs the most capable and qualified professionals in the government to provide strong leadership who will help our country achieve its financial and economic goals. In your collective decision lies the answer to the effective management of the Department of Finance that will contribute to the progress of our great nation," they further said.

"Good governance and sound financial management are the keys to reversing the current depressing economic situation. It is our hope that you will confirm the appointment of Camacho as finance secretary," said MBCCI president Roberto L. Montelibano in his group's letter to the CA.

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Makati, Ortigas office space occupancy down 27% in Oct.

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE CONTINUED weakening of the economy in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States further slowed down the office space business in Makati and Ortigas, the country's two major business districts, international property consultant FPDSavills said.

Although property rental values have fallen by more than 50 percent after peaking in 1997, FPDSavills said company-locators still opted to move to lower-priced grade B or C buildings from grade A office spaces.

In a recent report, FPDSavills said that the total office space occupancy in October was 27 percent lower than the previous month's level largely due to the 43-percent decline in Grade A office space take-up in the Makati central business district.

The consolidated grade B and C office space occupancy increased by 11 percent attributed mainly to a 40-percent increase in the Ortigas CBD.

The report said the take-up in October was down to 13,892 square meters compared with September's 19,130 sq. m., 73 percent of which came from the Makati CBD and the rest from the Ortigas CBD.

In the Makati CBD, the report noted a 43-percent decline in October from the September figure of 12,667 sq. m. to 7,203 sq. m. In the Ortigas CBD, grade A office take-up for the month also declined by 52 percent.

The Makati grade B and C sector also experienced a 9-percent decline in take-up while a 40-percent increase was recorded in Ortigas.

"Philippine economic indicators, which have been volatile in recent months, showed a continued downward trend, and the business uncertainty since Sept. 11 has added to the country's economic vulnerability," FPDSavills said.

TOTAL office space occupancy in October was 27 percent lower than the previous month's level largely due to the 43-percent decline in Grade A office space take-up in the Makati central business district.

"Against the backdrop of a weak economy, local and foreign investors infused lesser capital into new corporations and expansion projects during the first nine months of this year. This partly explains the weakening of the demand for real estate," it noted.

FPDSavills said new occupants in Makati Grade A buildings in October included Dentsu Philippines, The Thomson (Phils.) Corp., Investors Securities Corp., Bank of China, VFL Advisors Inc., Philippine Australia Governance Facility, Sykes Asia Inc., Ipac Global Link Advisers Inc. and The Embassy of Venezuela.

Tenants moved to grade A buildings in Makati such as Enterprise Center, Ayala Life-FGU Tower, Ayala Tower One, Philamlife Tower, Citibank Tower, Equitable Tower and Robinson's Summit Center (formerly called JG Summit Center).

In the Ortigas CBD, movers to Grade A buildings for October were Beukhen Porhrell Phils. Inc. and an affiliate of Oakridge Properties. They moved to the Philippine Stock Exchange Building and Discovery Center.

FPDSavills said the companies that moved to Makati grade B and C buildings were engaged in financial intermediation, transport business, storage and communication, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and real estate sectors.

In the Ortigas CBD, the new tenants in grade B and C sectors included companies engaged in community and social services, real estate, renting and other business activities such as hotels and restaurants, and transport, communication and storage.

At the start of the fourth quarter, the FPDSavills said the rental levels were pegged at P400 per sq. m. in the Makati CBD and P250 per sq. m. in the Ortigas CBD while their values remained at P60,000 per sq. m. and P35,000 per sq. m., respectively.

Despite the many challenges in Philippine business, however, FPDSavills said there were still bright prospects in some areas.

"For instance, companies in telecommunications, consumer products and retailing still reported high growth rates this year," FPDSavills said.

Among the growth areas in the country, it said, included the data centers or centralized storage facilities used by application service providers.

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Investments in RP ecozones down 57% at ₱30B

(From page B1)

P8.933 billion in the first 11 months from P24.75 billion a year ago. Expansion projects likewise fell 57 percent to P16.26 billion in the first 11 months this year from P38.2 billion a year ago. New ecozone projects stumbled 28 percent to P2.79 billion in the first 11 months from P3.86 billion a year ago. The only bright spot in Peza's performance was the rise in number of information technology investments, which jumped 80 percent to P1.94 billion this year from P1.077 billion a year ago.

The disappointing Peza investment inflow mirrored the expected drop in export this year as the country's biggest overseas markets—the United States and Japan—go into a recession.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II said the DTI was revising its initial estimate of flat export growth this year though he did not mention the new target. The government is likely to target a 10-percent fall in exports this year. Peza's main export product, semiconductor and electronic products, are going through a downturn worldwide.

Due to the gloomy export prospects, Peza director general Lilia B. de Lima said investments in government-run and private ecozones were likely to hit P50 billion next year.

Megaworld

(From page B1)

Instead of bidding for the controlling stake held by Metro Pacific Corp. in Bonifacio Land Corp., Megaworld is keen on specific property projects inside the Global City.

Megaworld, whose crown jewel is the 15-hectare Eastwood City, is a pioneer in cyberpark development and one of the leading players in the local property industry. Megaworld itself concentrates on the upscale market while subsidiary Empire East Land Holdings Inc. focuses on the middle-income market. On the other hand, Fairmont Holdings Inc. is being groomed into a mass housing arm.

Meanwhile, consortium leader Rufino is also joining a group led by Ayala Land Inc., which is bidding for MPC's 69.6-percent stake in BLC.

Gov't to pump-prime economy in first half of 2002

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE DEPARTMENT of Budget of Management has promised to settle during the first half of 2002 at least half of its P70 billion in payables in a bid to boost economic activity.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the government has appropriated P70 billion to pay its obligations to contractors and service providers in 2002.

The amount is 13.5 percent lower compared to the P81 billion that the government had shelled out this year for its payables, the budget chief said.

"We will front-load the expenditures for next year if Congress passes the budget and releases it in January. I want to pay the bulk or at least 50 percent of the payables during the first half," Boncodin said.

The plan to spend aggressively during the early part of the year would be in contrast to the strategy of the budget department this year when it chose to use as much savings as it could during the first semester.

The government was able to save about P11 billion from unused expenditure items during the first half of the year that it had only utilized in July and August.

"Next year, we have to take advantage of the lean months to even out the expenditures," Boncodin said.

Analysts said the plan of the budget department might constitute pump-priming and could help revive an economy that was expected to remain weak during the first semester.

The government has been criticized for stifling economic growth this year by cutting spending even on important items like infrastructure.

Economic growth is being anticipated during the second half of 2002 once the US economy has recovered and lead to healthier export earnings for the Philippines.

Until such time, analysts said the Philippine government had to rely on the domestic economy. Unleashing funds into the system by settling payables in advance should help fuel growth.

Next year, the government believes the economy as measured by the gross domestic product would grow by 4 to 4.5 percent, propped up by a stable exchange rate of P51-52 to a dollar and an average inflation rate of 5 to 6 percent.

The budget deficit should go down to P130 billion from this year's P145 billion and the amount, Boncodin said, might even be lower by P18 billion next year if the Senate would slash some expenditure items in the budget.

The government is hoping that Congress would approve soon its proposed budget of P780.8 billion next year, which would be 11.6 percent higher than this year's P699.9 billion.

Of the budget, PP754.3 billion is earmarked for spending while the government has committed to collect P624.3 billion in revenues, an amount 11 percent more than this year's target.

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Forest Hills A	250,000	220,000
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Manila Golf	-	12,000,000
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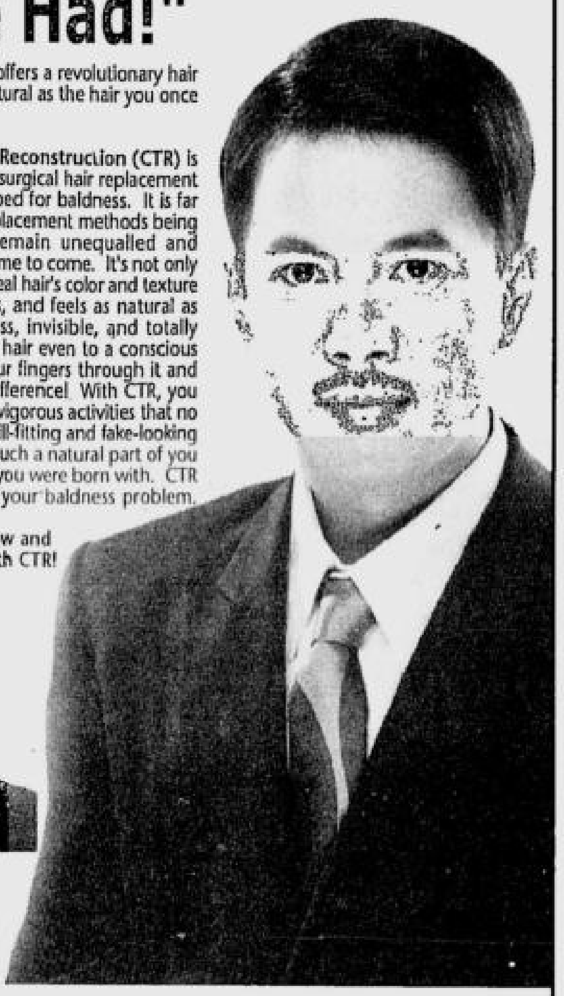

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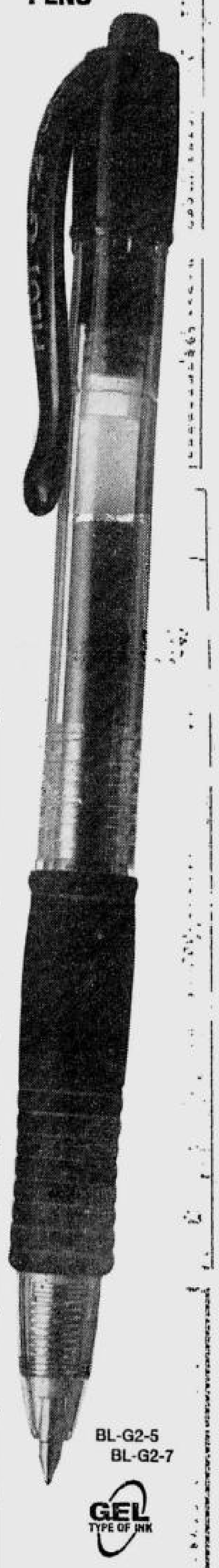

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The full ladder frame with boxed rails is made of high tensile steel, and features seven cross-members for additional support and rigidity. This gives the entire Vitara line a strong foundation for vehicle.

Two-speed tranfer case
Allows the driver to select 4wd low, used for serious off road driving, such as ascending or descending steep hills, sand, or mud.

Timing chain
The Suzuki 2.5 liter V6, 2.0 liter 4-cylinder engines are designed with dual overhead cams and a two-stage timing chain for better performance. The timing chain, developed from Suzuki motorcycle technology, is self lubricating, self adjusting, and requires no maintenance.

Fashionable and sporty
SUZUKI SWING UC 110RD

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CHOICE # 1 Purchase a Grand Vitara 2.0L / 2.5L and get a fashionable and sporty Suzuki 110CC Swing Motorcycle (For Cash or Regular financing rates sales only) includes 1 year LTO reg., & comprehensive insurance and imported helmet

CHOICE # 2 0% Interest 40% Dp/12 mos. for the Grand Vitara 2.0 L M/T
Low downpayment for 12-72 mos. term package also available

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PROMO PERIOD: Extended until Dec. 31, 2001, approved by DTI-NCR

FULL FRAME 4x4
GRAND VITARA
SUZUKI

All financing plans are subject to BPI Family Bank approval. Specifications shown may vary from actual unit. For more details, see your Suzuki dealer now!

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Mandaluyong City
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PILIPINAS TRANSPORT INDUSTRIES, INC. - LAS PINAS
Las Pinas City
Tel. Nos. 871-3878 / 80 / 94

GM AUTOWORLD -Makati
Makati City
Tel Nos. 843-0217 to 20 / 814-0803 / 814-0838

GM AUTOWORLD -Quezon Avenue
Quezon City
Tel. Nos. 374-1250 to 59 / 382-8001

GM AUTOWORLD -Shaw
Mandaluyong City
Tel. Nos. 535-4938 / 533-1263

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Rosario, La Union
Tel. Nos. (072) 712-8881 to 84

Baguio City
Tel Nos. (074) 300-8882 to 83

San Fernando
Tel. Nos. (072)700-6882 to 83

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Tel. Nos. (075) 515-8882 / 8888

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CHEERS TRADESTAR, INC.
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GM Autoworld Makati/Quezon Avenue/ Shaw now Suzuki full-line dealers.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3890, Series of 2001

本日の動き
2001/12/17
円レート
127.60-127.70

A MONEY dealer dressed as Santa Claus watches price movements as a monitor behind him indicates the weakening yen at a Tokyo foreign exchange brokerage. The yen was hounded to fresh multiyear lows on Monday after Japan's chief foreign exchange official signaled tacit acceptance of further weakness. The Japanese currency hit a 38-month low, breaching 128 yen against the greenback in morning trading in Tokyo on Monday. REUTERS

HK facing bleak Christmas amid an economic slowdown

HONG KONG—Hong Kong's usual free spending ways are just a memory for retailers this Christmas as residents fearful for their jobs elect to save rather than splash out with the territory sinking toward recession.

The dazzling neon Christmas decorations still adorn high-rise buildings along the famed Victoria harbor waterfront, but down at street level, the mood is more somber.

The territory's normally vibrant economy shrank 0.3 percent in the September quarter from a year earlier, and a further contraction is expected in the current quarter due to the global slowdown.

The unemployment rate jumped to 5.5 percent in the three months to October, and Hong Kongers' confidence has been shaken.

"We have to keep tabs on our spending," said accountant Raymond Ng, while shopping with his wife and two children in the popular shopping district of Causeway Bay. "We only spend what is needed."

"It's better to save at a time of economic difficulties," said Ng.

His family will eat at home this year rather than have their usual Christmas and New Year's eve dinners at restaurants.

"When money is easy to find, it's no problem spending up to 2,000 dollars (256 US) for a dinner," he said.

Hairdresser Carrie Wong also plans to tighten the purse strings, admitting she is worried about keeping her job.

"It is better to save now," she said.

Retailers complain of having to launch sales or offer discounts to keep the merchandise moving.

A boutique owner in Wanchai said some customers came into her shop twice to compare prices before deciding to buy.

"It's a week before Christmas, and we only have a few reservations," complained a restaurateur, who declined to be named, despite slashing more than 10 percent off the cost of the Christmas' eve dinner to some $250.

Yu Pang-chun, chair of the Hong Kong Retails Management Association, put a brave face on the situation facing shop owners.

"We are trying to be as optimistic as we can, but we are cautious," Yu told AFP.

The association is forecasting a fall of between one and 2 percent in retail sales this year, although tills have been ringing less and less as the year goes on.

Hong Kong retail sales fell 6.1 percent to $14.5 billion in October from a year earlier.

Yu blamed the poor consumer sentiment on the global economic slowdown, which was aggravated further by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

A survey carried out by the Democratic Party showed that 41.8 percent of the 658 respondents said they would slash spending because they were earning less than at the same time last year.

A further 24.3 percent said they planned to cut spending because they feared losing their job or having their salaries cut, while 51.5 percent said they had decided to stay in Hong Kong over the holidays. *AFP*

Lean times, tough choices in banking sector

LONDON—With the wind of wealth taken out of their sails, private banks are tacking into gusts of volatility and global recession as they head into 2002.

But even as banks on both sides of the Atlantic notch up losses and cut costs, big players are making for lights in the gloom and focusing on Europe's growth markets.

Swiss UBS AG has just opened for business in the French town of Marseilles five months after expanding to Lyon, US firm JP Morgan plans to tap Europe's onshore hedge fund market, and the United Kingdom's Schroders Plc. has just bought a hedge fund boutique in London and is expanding into private banking.

"It's been a lousy year for everybody," said Declan Sheehan, JP Morgan private bank chief for Europe-Middle East-Africa, which had just over $300 billion in client assets.

"But looking at 2002, I am positive," he told Reuters.

"We're ending the year with private client activity down and a lower asset base. We've got harder work to do to come back up. That's the bad news. The good news is that markets are coming back and we're seeing immense cash flows available."

Despite hopes of an economic turnaround, banks are treading carefully after big losses in 2001. Profitability is under pressure with slowing growth, higher risk from volatile markets and wage inflation within the industry caused by last year's unrealistic growth expectations.

"There is consolidation in the industry, consolidation in the markets and a change in the risk profile of our customers," said Bernd von Maltzan, divisional board member at Deutsche Bank with global responsibility for wealth management.

"Two-thousand-two will be better than 2001 but nowhere near the average of the last couple of years. That was a good party. In 2002, we will all become a little bit more sober," he told Reuters.

Back in April, banks were offering employees seven-digit pay packages and multiyear guarantees, with free dry cleaning and discounts at dress emporiums thrown in at some US banks.

Fast-forward to now and things are different.

Consultancy firm Pricewaterhouse-Coopers says the growth rate for the world's wealth management industry, put at $27 trillion in recent industry surveys, crashed by more than half in 2001.

It now expects offshore growth of 4 percent compared with year-ago industry estimates of 9 percent, and 6 percent for onshore business compared with a previous 14-percent forecast.

If that wasn't bad enough, US banks are bracing for worse with instability over Afghanistan and nervousness over Arab cash, although they say they have weathered the shock so far.

Sheehan predicted that 2001 industry revenues could fall by up to 20 percent and reported a yield compression of 10 to 15 percent with brokerage sales and trading worst hit. *Reuters*

Car imports into China to double

BEIJING—Vehicle imports into China are expected to more than double next year because of tariff reductions after the country's entry to the World Trade Organization, state press reported Monday.

At the same time, sales of locally made models are also anticipated to surge as local manufacturers drop prices and launch new models to compete, the China Daily quoted analysts as saying.

According to Xu Changming, an auto industry expert from China's State Information Center, vehicle imports into China will hit 200,000 units in 2002, the report said.

In the first 10 months of this year, imports reached 64,600 and were expected to hit 70,000 by the end of 2001, the newspaper quoted industry figures as saying.

The massive increase in imports would come as tariffs for foreign-built vehicles will be slashed to 43.8 to 50.7 percent at the beginning of 2002 from the current 70-80 percent, said Xu.

The tariff cut came under the terms of China's membership of the WTO, which formally began earlier this month.

Tariffs have already been cut from up to 100 percent this year, helping boost auto import figures from just 42,000 units in 2000. *AFP*

DESPITE RECESSION

Exotic cars still big in Singapore

SINGAPORE—Singapore may be going through a severe recession, but tell that to high-end car dealers still doing a roaring trade as wealthy enthusiasts spend fortunes on exotic wheels.

When collectors snapped up five gleaming new Lamborghini Murcielagos—each worth S$1.1-million ($600,000)—during a year-end auto fair in the affluent city-state, the dealers hardly raised an eyebrow.

"We are talking about buyers with a net worth of S$400 million. Even if that is halved in an economic crisis like this, they will still have S$200 million," said sales manager KC Chong of Lamborghini dealer EuroSports Auto.

Even ordinary cars are extremely expensive in tiny Singapore, where a quota system and steep taxes designed to limit car ownership can make an ordinary Japanese-made family sedan as expensive as a luxury model bought in the United States or Europe.

Singapore's economy is facing a 3-percent contraction this year—from a 9.9-percent growth in 2000 and its worst slowdown since independence—and next year's prospects remain uncertain amid mounting layoffs and salary cuts.

EuroSports managing director Melvin Goh said Singapore had "a fair number of very keen car enthusiasts" and, thanks to them, he cleared all of his stock for 2002, including S$4-million Lamborghini Diablos.

More bookings for the Italian-made, limited-edition supercars are expected next year, and Goh hopes to sell 20 more Murcielagos in the next four years.

Dealers described their typical clients as businessmen between their '30s and '80s, who are very passionate about their cars even if they seldom take the beauties out for a spin.

"The cars are something that they want but perhaps because of their lifestyles, they clock up no more than 3,000 kilometers of mileage a year," said Goh. *AFP*

Daewoo Motor resumes production

SEOUL, South Korea—Financially troubled Daewoo Motor Co. reopened its assembly lines Monday, five days after it was forced to stop production due to a lack of parts.

Daewoo, South Korea's third largest automaker in terms of assets, had been idle since its subcontractors halted parts deliveries Tuesday to protest the company's delays in paying 1.5 trillion won ($1.2 billion) in overdue bills.

During a meeting on Saturday, some 270 parts suppliers decided to end their boycott after Daewoo's main creditor, Korea Development Bank, promised to provide 122.3 billion won ($95 million) in loans for cash-short subcontractors.

Daewoo Motor, up for sale to General Motors Corp. of the United States, said the five-day boycott caused it 40 billion won ($31 million) in lost production.

After months of talks, GM signed a non-binding preliminary agreement in September to acquire control of Daewoo. The auto giant had said it planned to sign a binding agreement before year's end after a final due diligence. But unconfirmed local news reports said the negotiations were unlikely to be wrapped up by year's end.

Daewoo, a flagship of the giant Daewoo group that collapsed in the aftermath of the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, went bankrupt in November last year and had since been under court receivership.

Its total debt is estimated at over $17 billion.

Daewoo Motor has been a major headache for the South Korean government, which has been struggling to reform the country's debt-ridden businesses and financial industry.

Despite heavy debts, Daewoo Motor can help GM break into South Korea's closed market, and could bolster attempts to advance into China, a key target for future growth of American auto giants. *AP*

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Friday, December 14, 2001)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	54	56.5	54	56.5	469,000
China Banking Corp.	560	560	560	560	2,060
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	22	22.25	22	22.25	234,800
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	179	180	178	180	12,020
Philippine National Bank	55	56.5	55	56.5	42,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	19	19	19	19	3,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	14.25	14.25	14	14.25	38,700
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Filipino Fund Inc	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	230,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1280	1300	1280	1300	520
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1130	1135	1125	1130	25,310
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	23	23	23	23	51,400
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	0.37	0.39	0.37	0.39	1,250,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	580	580	575	580	44,490
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	1,000,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	900,000
Phil. Telegraph & Tel. Co	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	100,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	405	410	402.5	407.5	238,710
Ivantage Corp.	0.55	0.55	0.48	0.48	170,000
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	26,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	22.5	23	22.5	22.5	12,600
Manila Electric Co. B	30.5	30.5	30	30	1,074,100
Petron Corp.	1.44	1.5	1.42	1.48	5,643,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	40,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	15,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	1.88	1.94	1.88	1.94	1,827,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	10,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	40,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	60,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	5,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.7	491,000
La Tondena Distillers Inc.	24	24	23	23.5	85,200
RFM Corp.	2.14	2.24	2.1	2.2	18,861,000
San Miguel Corp. A	42	44	42	44	400,400
San Miguel Corp. B	51	56	51	55.5	547,600
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Ayala Corp.	4.55	4.65	4.55	4.6	5,649,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.68	1,760,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	50,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	10,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	50,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.18	210,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.65	0.66	23,950,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	700,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	60,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	100,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	1,190,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	25.5	26	25.5	26	82,100
Global Equities Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	200,000
Guoco Holdings (Phils.)	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	480,000
House of Investments Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	50,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.54	1.5	1.54	71,000
Medco Holdings	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.13	110,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.69	0.71	0.69	0.7	5,000,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	6,070,000
Music Corp.	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.37	4,000,000
Solid Group, Inc.	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.36	100,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	300,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. B	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Central Azucar Don Pedro	0.77	0.79	0.77	0.79	370,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13.25	13	13.25	164,800
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.45	0.47	0.45	0.47	620,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	200,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	22.75	22.75	22.5	22.5	1,794,000
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.56	1.6	1.56	1.56	145,000
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10	10	10	10	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10	10	10	10	1,000
Philweb.Com Inc -Warrants	0.0055	0.006	0.005	0.006	182,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.75	11,523,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	10,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	600,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.35	700,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	2,650,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.7	1.76	1.7	1.74	9,069,000
City & Land Developers	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	10,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	100,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.1	11,179,000
Universal Rightfield Prop	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	300,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc B	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	20,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	3,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	2.8	3	2.7	3	59,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.3	2.4	1.3	1.3	23,000
Itogon-Suyoc Mines A	0.022	0.022	0.02	0.02	6,400,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	4,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	180,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.0975	0.0975	0.0975	0.0975	200,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	1,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	170,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	18,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	360,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	1,078,310	68,234,930.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	346,443,400	360,071,075.00
PRO	36,141,000	139,895,630.00
Mining	14,382,000	513,200.00
OIL	189,360,000	1,209,300.00
GRAND TOTALS :	587,414,710	569,949,135.00

AVERAGES

Banks & Fin Svc	466.80	UP 10.01
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,547.62	UP 23.36
PRO	489.87	DOWN 1.78
Mining	1,016.96	DOWN 6.29
OIL	1.98	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	690.12	UP 0.61
Composite	1,126.01	UP 18.28

NO. OF ADVANCES: 27; NO. OF DECLINES: 31; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 34;
NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 92; NO. OF TRADES: 2,497

CURRENCIES

Dec. 14, 2001

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.119695	1.000000	52.0340
Japan	Yen	0.008894	0.007943	0.4133
United Kingdom	Pound	1.612585	1.440200	74.9394
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.143735	0.128370	6.6796
Switzerland	Franc	0.677823	0.605364	31.4995
Canada	Dollar	0.713500	0.637227	33.1575
Singapore	Dollar	0.612190	0.546747	28.4494
Australia	Dollar	0.579552	0.517598	26.9327
Bahrain	Dinar	2.970172	2.652661	138.0286
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.298586	0.266667	13.8758
Brunei	Dollar	0.610521	0.545256	28.3719
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000111	0.000099	0.0052
Thailand	Baht	0.025646	0.022904	1.1918
UAE	Dirham	0.304928	0.272331	14.1705
Korea	Won	0.000886	0.000791	0.0412
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.893100	46.4716
Germany	Mark	0.511292	0.456635	23.7605
France	Franc	0.152450	0.136152	7.0845
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453780	0.405271	21.0879
Austria	Schilling	0.072673	0.064904	3.3772
Belgium	Franc	0.024789	0.022139	1.1520
Italy	Lire	0.000516	0.000461	0.0240
Finland	Markka	0.168188	0.150209	7.8160
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.004455	0.2318
Spain	Peseta	0.006011	0.005368	0.2793
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024789	0.022139	1.1520
Ireland	Punt	1.269738	1.134003	59.0067

People, Events & Products

ARIES B. ESPINOSA, Assistant Editor

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Habito joins beefed-up Ateneo economic bench; building new forecasting model

FORMER Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and Neda director-general Cielito F. Habito, recently joined the newly strengthened economics department of the Ateneo de Manila University, where he heads a new unit that is constructing a new forecasting model of the Philippine economy.

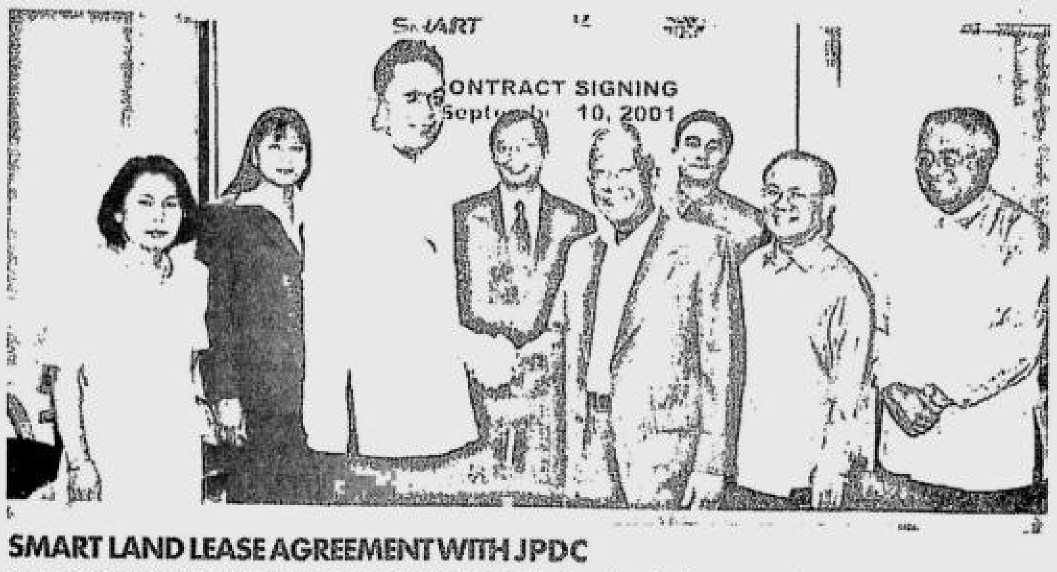
Habito's appointment as director of the Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development (Acerd) and project director of the Macroeconomic Research Unit (MRU) was endorsed by the Acerd board, which includes businessmen Octavio Espiritu, Jr as chair, Edward Go and Manuel Pangilinan, together with senior economics faculty members Ellen Palanca, Kenneth See and Leonardo Lanzona Jr. Espiritu also chairs the Board of Trustees of the Ateneo. Also in the meeting was Fr. Jose M. Cruz, SJ, dean of the Ateneo School of Social Sciences.

"We are determined to put Ateneo squarely on the map of quality economic forecasting and policy research," according to Lanzona, who is chair of the Ateneo economics department. Lanzona revealed that the Ateneo economics faculty now boasts 13 Ph.D.s and 11 masteral degree holders and will begin offering a Doctoral Program in Economics next year. "We believe that Ateneo has emerged to become a strong force in the field of economics, and our upcoming efforts are meant to further solidify that position," declared Lanzona, who heads the department where President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had taught in the '80s.

Lanzona explained that the Ateneo macroeconomic modeling project will have a distinct "Ateneo flavor", in that "we will go beyond mere projections of GDP/GNP growth and other macroeconomic indicators, but continuously analyze poverty and social welfare implications of economic trends and policies as well." Ateneo has been noted for its work in social policy and culture, and has played host to key reformist movements, including the one that ushered President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo into power early this year.

"We aim to build a model that will be of good use to policymakers, researchers and the business sector alike," explained Habito, who headed the agency of government primarily tasked with economic forecasting and development planning under the Ramos administration. "Our model will combine the best quantitative tools now available in the field of economics, and will be able to examine both the macro and micro dimensions of economic policies and trends. This is particularly important at this time when it is becoming fashionable to focus on microeconomics in addressing our continuing economic problems," said Habito, who had built a comprehensive computer model of the Philippine economy for his doctoral dissertation at Harvard University in the early '80s. He is now bringing this expertise into the Ateneo project, along with his government experience and current involvement in the banking sector as director of Metrobank, the country's largest bank. The Ateneo model is expected to be operational by the first quarter of 2002.

Aside from Habito, the Ateneo economists making up the core Acerd-MRU team are Lanzona, Roehlano Briones, Rosalina Tan and Luis Dumlao, and Ph.D holders. The project is being supported by a grant from the PLDT Foundation, with direct sponsorship from Pangilinan.



SMART LAND LEASE AGREEMENT WITH JPDC

As part of its efforts in building telecommunications infrastructure for the country's economic zones, Smart Communications Inc. recently signed a 10-year lease contract with the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) subsidiary John Hay Poro Point Development Corp. (JPDC) for the use of its property in Poro Point. The agreement will facilitate the installation of a Smart 1800 Mhz cellsite that will enhance digital network coverage and quality at the Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, as well as San Fernando, La Union. Poro Point is envisioned to become an international industrial estate with tourism facilities, an airport and a seaport. The special economic zone is planned to play a vital role in the economic development for the North Luzon Growth Quadrangle. Shown (front row, from left) is Cora Raquedan, head for finance – accounting control, Smart Communications Inc.; engineer Rodante Medina, head for network services division – project management and implementation, Smart Communications Inc.; Gen Fortunato U. Abat, president and CEO, John Hay Poro Point Development Corp. (JPDC); engineer Victor G. Floresca, vice president, John Hay Poro Point Development Corp.; and lawyer Damaso E. Bangaoet Jr., executive vice president, John Hay Poro Point Development Corp. (JPDC). Shown at the back (from left) are Emma Lim, director, John Hay Poro Point Development Corp.; Anastacio R. Martirez, head for mobile services and personal communications, Smart Communications Inc.; and Ramoncito Fernandez, head for administration, materials and management division, Smart Communications Inc.

NURSES' MAGAZINE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

PHILIPiNURSE, the first-ever professional nurses' magazine in the country, recently held its Advisory Board meeting last Nov. 25 at Monte Vista, Tagaytay City. Present during the meeting (seated, from left) are Sr. Remy Junio, Sally Mercurio, executive director Nessi Dionisio, Lydia Venzon and Sr. Francesca San Diego. Standing (from left) Venzon, Rosario de Leon, Rita Tamse, publisher Dr. Rusty L. Francisco, editor Walter Panganiban and Gerry Olayta.

HP introduces longest-lasting extended battery for Jornada Pocket PC users

HEWLETT-PACKARD announced the immediate availability of an exciting new accessory for its Jornada 560 series Pocket PC, the longest lasting extended battery pack in the market for Pocket PCs.

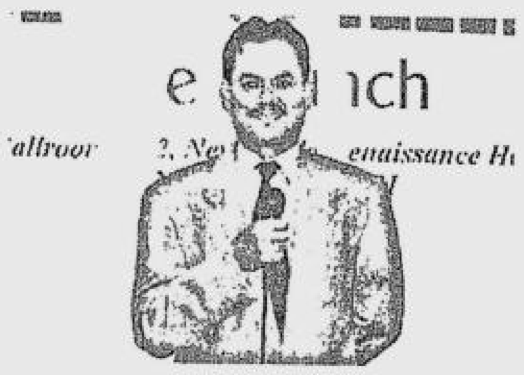
Jornada users now have the option to enjoy up to 10 hours or more battery life than offered by their standard battery pack. HP's new removable and rechargeable extended Pocket PC battery pack delivers up to 24 hours of continuous use. offering HP Jornada Pocket PC users increased mobility and power on the go.

The stylish, lightweight HP Jornada Pocket PC 560 series is the ideal companion for mobile professionals with a 16-bit color reflective TFT screen that ensures crisp, vibrant colors both indoors and out.

With its unique, built-in Compact Flash slot (Type 1 extended), the Jornada 560 series can easily and directly accommodate an assortment of attachable accessories without add-on sleeves, which only adds extra cost, weight and size. Weighing just 173 grams, the Jornada 560 series' built-in Compact Flash slot gives users convenient access to a range of accessories such as storage cards, the HP Pocket PC Camera, and also a wide range of third party products such as modems, wireless LAN cards, Bluetooth cards, GPS navigation, VGA Out card, barcode scanners and much more.

Users can also look forward to other new accessories coming soon – all of which ensure improved power and performance for the mobile professional.

HP's latest Jornada Pocket PC 560 series is available in the Philippines through MSI-Digiland (Phil.) Inc. For product details, call Cecilio Tuanquin or e-mail c_tuanquin@msi_digiland.com.ph



TRANE PHILIPPINES' NEW LINE

Trane Philippines, the local marketing and service company of one of the largest manufacturers of heating, ventilating, air conditioning and building systems and management based in the United States, recently launched its Small Chillers line of products at the New World Hotel, Makati City. These Trane Small Chillers are specially designed for easy installation in confined spaces and provide maximum cooling comfort for homes, luxury housings, restaurants, retail stores, office buildings and other small/medium sized venues. Shown is K.W. Ho, business manager.

MUNTINLUPA'S OWN 'CINDERELLA'

The Philippines' Muntinlupa Dance Company (MDC), Muntinlupa City's 'ambassador of goodwill' and 'pioneer in the city's art and culture movement', celebrates the holiday season by staging a Demca Philippines production of the timeless classic 'Cinderella' at the Carousel Court, Festival Supermall Filinvest Alabang on Dec. 22 and 23 at 5 p.m. Produced by Festival Supermall, the classical dance-drama showcases the multi-talented and versatile MDC members, all residents of Muntinlupa. Shown is the cast of 'Cinderella' (from left, seated) Jason Bautista (Duke's servant), Jeramel Mendoza (Duke); standing, Sharon Garcia (stepmother), Rizza Paguio, (Cinderella), Arnel Enriquez (King), John Henry Santos (Prince), Trixie and Alanis (stepsisters). Cinderella is directed by artist/writer Del Micor-Camins while choreographer is Benjie Ligas.

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MBC AGREEMENT WITH MALAYSIAN FIRM

Manila Broadcasting Company (MBC), the country's largest radio network, recently entered into an agreement with the Binariang Satellite Systems SDN. BHD (BSS) is a Malaysian company which owns and operates communications satellites for the lease of C-band transponder capacity on the Measat 2 satellite. The Measat 2 will carry the digital audio broadcasts of MBC's AM and FM stations throughout the archipelago. The satellite is expected to improve MBC operations by widening its coverage and reach and by sending out digital audio not only to the whole of the Philippines but also to other Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan where Measat 2 can be reached. The lease period will be for three years, or until July 2004. Sealing the agreement with a handshake are Fred J. Elizalde (seated right), MBC chair and Yau Chyong Lim, BSS regional marketing manager for Southeast Asia. They are joined by (from right) Juan Elizalde, MBC vice president; Rupert Nicdao Jr., MBC president; Joseph Nebrida, BSS country representative and Emily Chee, BSS marketing executive for Southeast Asia.

Internet franchise opportunity

THE DEMAND for Internet use is growing everyday, and surfers range from children to adults, students to businessmen. There is money in operating Internet Cafés, if these can offer broadband Internet connection--not just games. Under broadband we speak of high-speed Internet connection 100 kbps or faster which provides faster surfing speed to download music, video and other formats faster.

FB Net Business Center is an Internet Café chain, which specializes on providing broadband services to its clients, is now franchising nationwide even in areas with limited telecommunications or Internet service providers.

FB Net can set up a Broadband connection anywhere in the Philippines using the best technology available.

Interested applicants for franchising are required to have a location area of 60 sqm. and capitalization worth P550,000. Included is the franchise fee.

FB Net can help you succeed in the Internet Café business. You will receive training, a procurement program, site selection assistance, pre-opening assistance at the location and other means of operational support. You don't have to be a computer wizard to operate the FB Net Franchise.

For a franchise kit call or fax Robert Martin at 083-554-6739 or e-mail rmartin@mindanao.com. Visit www.mindanao.com/fbnet.

Excelsior College
Makati Shangri-La

CHED BACKS STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

Dr. Manuel D. Punzal, acting chair of the Commission on Higher Education, declared during the 'Virtual Global University' launch-press conference at Shangri-la Manila in Makati that 'It is an honor for CHED to support as historic event the strategic alliance formed by International Academy of Management and Economics (I/AME-Makati) and Excelsior College, Albany, New York because it is consistent with CHED's advocacy of networking institutional linkages, and internalization of education in a borderless world'. Seated (from left) are Emmanuel Candido Soriente-Santos II, I/AME president-COO, Evlin Fuentes, country manager and Asia-Pacific general manager, and Dr. Emmanuel Noli Santos, I/AME chair and CEO.

Clear, bright presentations with Sony LCD Projectors

SONY LCD VPL-CX1/CX2 LCD Data Projectors are the clear, bright and convenient way to make presentations. These two new models are not only light and compact, they are also packed with many impressive functions.

The two projectors are stylishly designed and feature user-friendly menus and a versatile remote control.

Sony LCD VPL-CX1/CX2 LCD Data Projectors are available at AV Value, which carries these products at great packages and flexible payment schemes. AV Value also offers rental services to clients who are in need of good projection equipment but who don't have the financial capability to purchase one at the moment.

For more information, call 522-3075 and 525-7650 (telefax).

COLGA PALMOLI
team asia
CO RAC NG

COLGATE-PALMOLIVE SPONSORS GAL GAMES

Colgate-Palmolive recently signed an agreement with TeamAsia as title sponsor of the Girls Athletic League or GAL Games, a volleyball and cheerleading competition among girl high schools in Metro Manila. Officially called Colgate-Palmolive GAL Games, the competition will be held at the La Salle Green Hills Gym in January. Shown are (seated, from left) Aurora Maniaul, product manager for Palmolive Naturals Shampoo and Moisturizing Conditioner; Monette Iturralde-Hamlin, president, TeamAsia and Cherish Canizares, senior product manager, Colgate Cosmetic Toothpaste Segment. Standing are (from left) Tristan 'Rolly' Leveriza, media and promotions manager, Colgate-Palmolive Philippines and Albert delos Santos, vice president for marketing, TeamAsia.

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NOTICE OF AUCTION SALE

To satisfy the real estate tax deliquency of the following taxpayers, computation of which includes interest, surcharges and penalties thereon as of September 2001 and after substantially complying with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act. 7160, the City Mayor through the undersigned City Treasurer, hereby gives notice to all interested parties and to the public in general that on **February 8, 2002 at 10:00 o'clock in the morning at the main entrance of the city hall, Main Building City Hall of Parañaque City**, the City Treasurer or his authorized representatives with sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash and in Philippines Currency, the real estate properties described below:

Declared Owner	Area (Sqm.)	Classification	Tax Dec. #	Location	Interest Due	Amount of Delinquency
1.) Manila Int'l. Airport Authority TCT No.: 23392, 20883, 20882, 20881, 20880, 20879, 20878, 20877, 20876, 20875, 33246, 33245, 36544, T-389, T-390, 78864, T-467 TCT No.: 32979	71,609	Com. Lot	E016-01385	Bgy. Vitalez	3,190,180.95	6,444,810.00
	193,760	Com. Lot	E016-01387	Bgy. Vitalez	17,264,015.00	34,876,800.00
	836	Com. Lot	E016-01396	Bgy. Vitalez	37,243.80	75,240.00
	25,685.6	Com. Improvement	E016-01374	Bgy. Vitalez	70,193,963.92	111,689,424.90
	12,508	Com. Improvement	E016-01375	Bgy. Vitalez	12,742,986.96	20,276,058.00
	30,000	Com. Improvement	E016-01376	Bgy. Vitalez	36,542,043.36	58,144,028.00
	~	Com. Machineries	E016-01377	Bgy. Vitalez	11,397,144.25	18,134,614.65
	~	Com. Machineries	E016-01378	Bgy. Vitalez	69,828,522.04	111,107,950.40
	~	Com. Machineries	E016-01379	Bgy. Vitalez	2,716,480.80	4,322,340.00
	~	Com. Machineries	E016-01380	Bgy. Vitalez	4,887,292.32	7,776,436.00
				Sub-Total	228,799,874.40	372,847,701.95
2.) Metroplas Packaging Products Corp.	2,715.9	Ind'l. Improvement	E006-10194	Bgy Marcelo	1,070,021.55	1,877,230.80
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E006-10195	Bgy. Marcelo	3,352,403.51	4,292,793.60
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E006-10196	Bgy. Marcelo	1,427,563.32	2,271,473.45
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E006-10197	Bgy. Marcelo	843,069.93	1,359,790.20
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E006-10198	Bgy. Marcelo	55,407.15	111,933.60
	~			Sub-Total	6,746,465.46	9,913,221.65
3.) Uliam's Int'l. Inc. TCT No.: 74540	1,800	Industrial Lot	E009-07992	Bgy. Sn. Antonio	693,678.17	1,290,131.55
	2,052	Ind'l. Improvement	E009-07993	Bgy. Sn. Antonio		
4.) Diamant Board Phils. Inc.	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E014-00335	Bgy. Sun Valley	52,768.09	38,567.10
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E014-00337	Bgy. Sun Valley	57,105.36	115,364.40
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E014-00340	Bgy. Sun Valley	39,860.37	80,526.00
	~	Ind'l. Machinery	E014-00341	Bgy. Sun Valley	127,853.13	258,289.20
			E014-00342	Bgy. Sun Valley	395,316.30	368,523.70
				Sub-Total	672.903.25	861,270.40
5.) Santosa Park Properties Dev. Corp. TCT No: 107166	3,382	Ind'l. Lot	E012-03586	Sn. Martin de Porres	123,844.62	290,716.19
	3,076	Ind'l. Lot	E012-03588	Sn. Martin de Porres	112,639.29	264,419.94
				Sub-Total	236,483.91	555,136.13

(Sgd.) **LIBERATO M. CARABEO**
ICO-City Treasurer

(PDI--Dec. 11 & 18, 2001)

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

December 14, 2001

RE-INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Housing Authority is inviting interested contractors who have completed similar works (at least 50% of Estimated Contract Cost) within the last three (3) years and accredited with PCAB/IAC, to bid for the contracts listed as follows:

Bid Package	Scope of Works	Project Cost (Million)	PCAB Category	IAC Classification
1. Lingap Para sa Kawal Pilipino Housing Project, Negros Occidental	Construction of 10 houses	P1.40	C	Small "B" for Building
2. Palo Housing Proj. (Remaining Works), Palo, Leyte	Land Development	P2.20	C	Small "B" for Roads

A. Eligibility Statement forms, bid documents/plans as well as other information are available at the Office of the BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, NHA Main Building, Diliman, Quezon City upon submission of the following: a) Letter of Intent; b) PCAB/IAC License; c) Certificate of Completion/Acceptance and Contract Agreement of completed similar project; and d) Presentation of above-cited original documents for authentication purposes.

B. Payment of non-refundable fee of P500.00 per set shall be received only from authorized representatives.

C. Did deposits shall be in the form of cash, Manager's or Cashier's Check.

D. Deadline of submission of LOI/issuance of bid documents is on **January 2, 2002.** Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **January 3, 2002** at 10:00 a.m. at the Operations Center, 3rd Floor, NHA Main Building.

E. NHA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive formally any minor defect thereon, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) **JOSEPH PETER S. SISON**
Assistant General Manager
Chairman, Bid and Award Committee

(PDI - Dec. 18 & 29. 2001)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

THIS IS TO INFORM THE PUBLIC THAT **MR. RENE REMOLACIO RANARA,** WHOSE PICTURE SHOWN ABOVE IS NO LONGER CONNECTED WITH **PACC SHIPPING PHILS., INC.** EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 15, 2001. ANY TRANSACTION ENTERED TO HIM AFTER THE SAID DATE SHALL NOT BE HONORED BY OUR COMPANY.

(PDI – Dec. 18, 2001)

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"I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are Yours."
John 17:9

Nanay, your presence will be deeply missed,
but the memories of your love and goodness
will live with us and remain in our hearts forever.

FULGENCIA NICOLAS CRUZ

*Has joined her husband "**ALBERTO, SR.**" and peacefully rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord on December 17, 2001 at the age of 88.*

Her bereaved children **ALBERTO, JR., EVANGELINE**, and **DALTON**; son-in-law **LA VERNE**; grandchildren **RITCHIE, KARLO** and **KRISTIN** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington East, The Garden Chapels, C. Raymundo cor. Mercedes Avenue, San Miguel, Pasig City.

Interment will be on December 20, 2001 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Cor. 5:8

"To everything there is season. And a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

We remember and pray for the eternal rest of the soul of our beloved

ENRIQUETA "Tia Etang" QUIJANO VARDELEON

of Poblacion, San Ildefonso, Bulacan

who peacefully joined our Lord on December 16, 2001 at the age of 70.

Her loving husband **Rufino G. Vardeleon**; children **Rex & Gina, Leah, Leni, Cora & Omel**; brother **Antonino**; sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Vardeleon's Residence, Poblacion, San Ildefonso, Bulacan.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 22, 2001 at the Angelicum Memorial Park after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at the San Ildefonso Parish Church, San Ildefonso, Bulacan.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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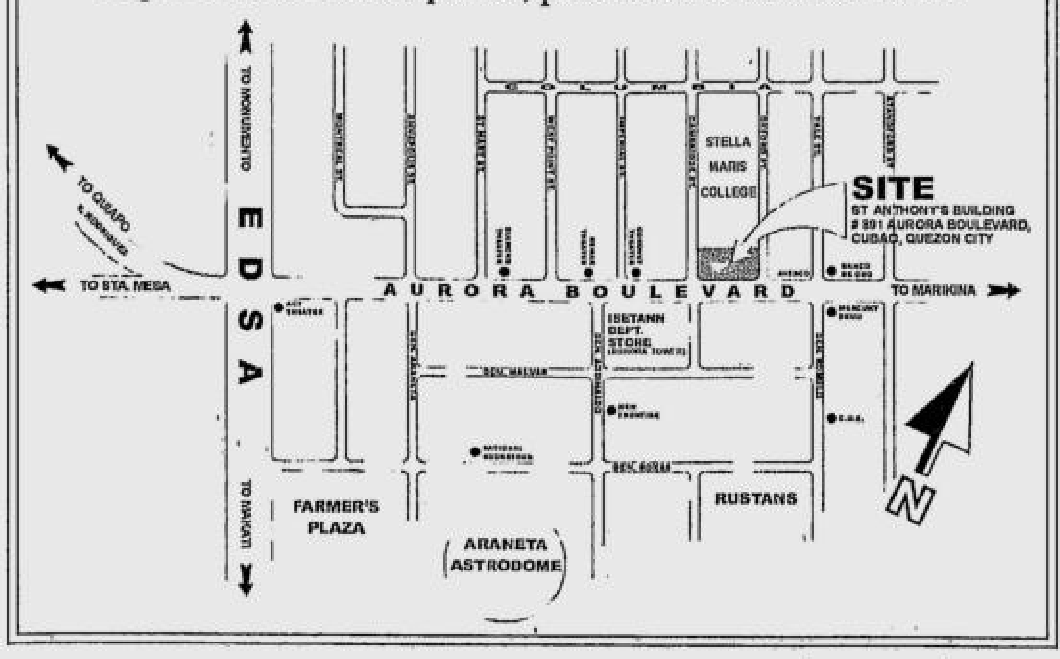

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REAL ESTATE

CESAR D. MANGAWANG, Editor

BOT bids sought for Manila North Harbor modernization

THE COORDINATING Council for Private Sector Participation—Build- Operate-Transfer Center and the Philippine Ports Authority recently signed the technical assistance agreement (TAA) for the modernization of the Manila North Harbor.

CCPSP-BOT executive director Noel Eli B. Kintanar and PPA general manager Alfonso G. Cusi signed the agreement at the PPA office.

The TAA comes on the heels of the PPA's request for technical assistance through the CCPSP-managed BOT Project Development Facility (PDF). It covers the hiring of consultants through competitive bidding to prepare the pre-investment studies and bid documents in time for the bidding of the port project next year. The CCPSP has recently issued an invitation to prequalify for consulting services for BOT/PSP port projects under the PDF.

Transformation

The modernization of the Manila North Harbor will involve the financing, development, management, operation and maintenance of its various facilities/services by the private sector under a BOT arrangement with the PPA. The much-needed transformation of the Manila North Harbor, the country's premier domestic port, into a modern terminal facility is expected to boost the port's capacity and productivity to meet rapidly growing cargo and passenger demand.

An increase in port efficiency is expected to directly support the growth of domestic trade, industrial and commercial development within the National Capital Region and redound to significant economic gains to the general consumers. The implementation of MNH modernization shall be guided by principles of competition, transparency and sustainable development.

The BOT-PDF was developed by the CCPSP and is funded from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) seed capital contributions. It is a loan facility that can be tapped by government implementing agencies and LGUs to support project preparation and packaging for BOT projects.

Public bidding

Accessing the BOT-PDF requires IAs and LGUs to implement their projects through public competitive bidding using the Amended BOT Law (Republic Act 7718) procurement guidelines. The winning bidder for the BOT project will reimburse the cost for project development provided under the BOT-PDF to replenish the fund.

The CCPSP-BOT Center, the administrator of the PDF, is a national agency attached to the Office of the President mandated by RA 7718 or the BOT Law to coordinate and monitor infrastructure projects implemented under the BOT program.

CHURCH COMPLETION

Laguna BelAir, the popular township development of housing giant Empire East Land Holdings Inc. in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, recently completed the village church in time for the Christmas holidays. Empire East officers led by president Anthony Charlemagne Yu and first vice president Maricen Jalandoni joined local government officials in the community's first eucharistic celebration. Designed by Jorge Yulo & Associates, the steel and glass structure features a modern architectural design amid spacious, landscaped surroundings.

Global realty services leader restructures Asia-Pacific operation

JONES Lang LaSalle is restructuring its Asia-Pacific business along client-oriented business lines rather than geographies. The restructure, which takes effect from Jan. 1, 2002, will vertically integrate the firm's comprehensive services according to client type—real estate owners, occupiers and investors—to deliver client-specific solutions from concept to completion.

Said Chris Brown, chief executive officer of Asia Pacific: "Our clients have told us they want only 'best in class,' seamless service across the region. As a firm fully focused on client needs, we have restructured our Asia-Pacific operation to deliver this service. We believe that this client-driven structure will increase our service delivery capabilities, resulting in better integration of services, implementation of best practices both regionally and globally, and the embracing of a more solutions-oriented approach to meeting the full range of our clients' needs."

3 new business units

Brown added that "the new structure will also allow us to leverage our advanced technologies and proprietary research across our entire platform and range of services."

To meet the needs of real estate occupiers, owners and investors, three new business units have been formed. They are Corporate Solutions, Investor Services and Capital Markets, headed by managing directors Phil Simpson, Sam Whiffin and Craig Williams respectively. In addition, Global Client Services, headed by managing director John Forrest will be responsible for cliient relationship development and management. These business units will look after the real estate needs of occupiers, investors and owners at global, regional and local levels.

The client-focused business units are assisted by the support services unit, headed by chief operating officer Stuart Roberts.

Each country will retain a country head, whose key role will be to work closely with the business units to identify and develop new business opportunities for the firm.

World leader

Jones Lang LaSalle is the world's leading real estate services and investment management firm, operating across more than 100 markets on five continents. The company provides comprehensive integrated expertise, including management services, implementation services and investment management services on a local, regional and global level to owners, occupiers and investors.

Jones Lang is the industry leader in property and corporate facility management services, with a portfolio of approximately 700 million square feet (65 million square meters) under management worldwide. LaSalle Investment Management, the company's investment management business, is one of the world's largest and most diverse real estate investment management firms, with US$22.5 billion of assets under management.

Bacoor mall opens with 'tiangge'

CUEVASVILLE Plaza quietly opened for business on Saturday with its community offering dubbed as the "Tiangge ng Bayan."

Cuevasville Realty & Development Corp. says that the move is in line with its corporate commitment to make "Christmas affordable to Bacoor residents." The offering runs until the mall's grand opening on Dec. 29.

The company says that the *tiangge* (flea market) offers an array of goods such as toys, apparel, electronic products, appliances and various gift items at "rock-bottom prices." It adds that the *tiangge* is open not only for Bacoor residents but also for neighboring communities and for those who happen to be passing by in the mall's vicinity. The company urges everyone to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

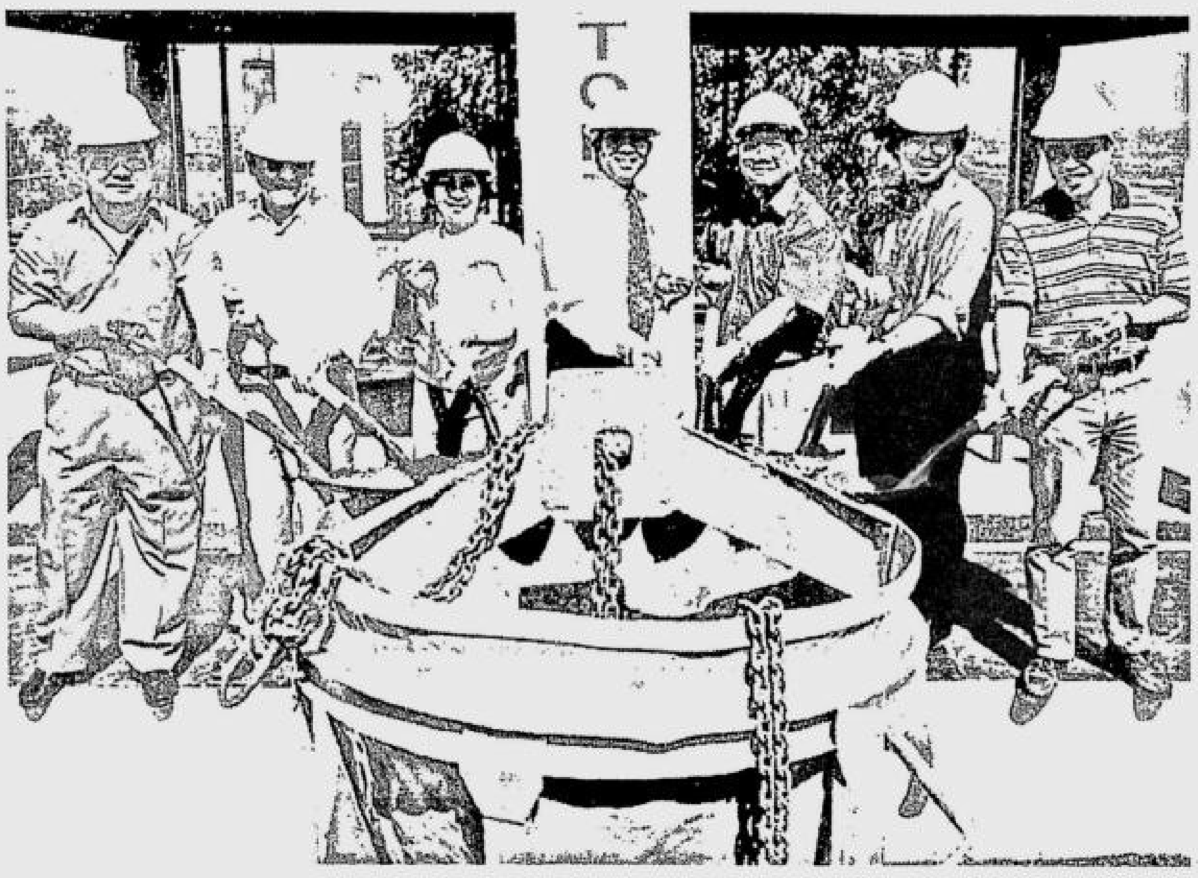
It says that this is the only *tiangge* where people can shop for bargain items in style, what with the mall's first-class amenities found only in five-star mall.

Cuevasville Plaza is a four-story building that sits on a 32,000-square-meter lot. It boasts of first-class amenities. Apart from being brown-out-free, assuring shoppers of nonstop air-conditioning convenience, it has state-of-the-art cinemas, elevators and escalators.

The mall is located on the busiest section of the Zapote stretch which hosts a slew of various commercial establishments such banks, public market, convenience stores, medical center, food, drug and other shops. The area has average consumer traffic of about 1,500 per hour on off peek and roughly 2,500 per hour on peek hours.

Consumer traffic is only one of the reasons for Cuevasville's optimism on its mall's success. Aside from the area having a customer mix of A, B, C, D and E, the company is taking advantage of the recent economic boom in Cavite. The province is one of the least affected by the current economic crisis. Its years of growth, which it has nurtured, have given it enough cushions.

The perfect location will undoubtedly make Cuevasville Plaza a prominent shopping haven for local residents and other neighboring towns.



CLUBHOUSE TOPPING OFF

Built right on schedule, a two-level clubhouse is now rising at the heart of the 15-hectare nature park that will serve as centerpiece of Ayala Greenfield Estates (AGE) in Calamba, Laguna. AGE recently held the topping-off ceremonies for the clubhouse, which will showcase the nature park's features that include a lagoon, an orchard, an open playing field and tree groves. AGE, a joint undertaking of Ayala Land Inc. and Greenfield Development Corp., is the latest development within Ayala South—the future alternative hub to Metro Manila. From left are Makati Development Corp. president Emilio J. Tumbocon, Ayala Greenfield Development Corp. director Hector A. Diangkinay, Ayala Land vice president for sales and marketing Ma. Victoria E. Añonuevo, AGDC senior executive officer Jeffrey Campos and director Renato E. Lirio, clubhouse architectural consultant Andy Locsin of Leandro V. Locsin & Partners and AGDC general manager Ricardo N. Jacinto.

Developers help HUDCC prepare rules on housing dev't permits

PRIVATE housing practitioners affiliated with the Subdivision and Housing Developers Association are lending their consultative services and technical expertise to the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council to facilitate the issuance of the implementing rules and regulations (IRRs) of Executive Order 45 recently issued by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. EO 45 drastically cuts to 90 days the permit issuance process for housing subdivision development.

Noel S. Gonzales, SHDA national president, said this is part of the industry-wide support to Housing Secretary Michael T. Defensor, concurrent HUDCC chair, in pursuit of the recent housing initiatives of President Macapagal.

Private sector participation

"Through private sector participation in fine-tuning the implementing rules, we hope to sustain the momentum created by EO 45 into an industry mobilization to spark the massive production of decent and affordable housing units, at the same time perk up renewed economic activities and generate additional employment," Gonzales explained.

The private housing sector, considered as the engine of growth in the shelter and property development, needs to reciprocate the government's exercise of political will in cutting government administrative processes in the issuance of necessary permits and licensee from two-and-a-half years to three months, for a housing project to get started, he said.

Simultaneous processing

Among other things, the executive order provides for the simultaneous processing of housing-related applications with local government units; Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board; the Departments of Agrarian Reform, Environment and Natural Resources and Agriculture.

It also calls for the establishment of regional one-stop offices in various government agencies and the designation of responsible officers to attend to said housing applications.

"It is also significant that under the presidential order, where the responsible officer of the agencies concerned fails or refuses to dispose of the application within the period prescribed, the applicant may, unless expressly prohibited by law, submit an affidavit, with supporting technical studies and documents by competent individuals, in lieu of the government certification, clearance or permit for a housing project," Gonzales added.

'Happy Family' housing loan up by 4.5%

DESPITE the worldwide economic crunch, BPI Family Bank's Happy Family Housing Loan managed to maintain its leadership by a growth of 4.5 percent in portfolio.

Marketing efforts like the "Easy Loan, Gifts to Own" promo streamlined the processing on the five-day turnaround credit decision and competitive interest rates have contributed in maintaining the bookings in spite the drop in industry portfolio.

Notwithstanding the global recession, BPI Family Bank went one step further by introducing two new additional products. These are the Express Pabahay and the Express First Home, special loan packages that promise the lowest rates, lower down payment and longer term for first time home buyers.

In response to the Philippine government's shelter program, BPI Family Bank has set aside P5 billion for this purpose to help jumpstart the nation's economy. It aims to expand its business coverage to the affordable housing sector and equip the Filipino with the means to provide his family with the comfortable life they deserve.

In its thrust of bringing the Philippines toward globalization, BPI Family Bank supports the housing sector by making available various affordable housing loans tailor fit to every Filipino's needs.

50% COMPLETE

Cyber One, a 30-story office development of premier property developer Megaworld Corp. at the Eastwood City CyberPark in Quezon City, is 50 percent complete with construction work for its structural shell entering its finishing stage. Located at the corner of Eastwood Avenue and E-Commerce Road, Cyber One boasts a typical floor plate of 1,600 square meters and a column-free layout. A technology-friendly business center, it will also host the country's first ifformation technology and electronics mall called Cyber One Mall, which will occupy the first two podium floors.

Federal Hardware RP's tile supermarket

ONLY Federal Hardware Builder's Center offers the widest assortment of local and imported tiles in the country.

Here, do-it-yourself enthusiasts and professional contractors will find a comprehensive collection of the world's best-known names in tiles. Shoppers can choose from a dazzling array of colors, designs and sizes for all types of surface finish.

Exclusive tie-ups

Located on Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo), Makati City, Federal Hardware is an American-style one-stop builder's destination that has exclusive tie-ups with world-famous ceramic tile brands like Stylnul, Navarti and Plaza Ceramica. All three are leading names in Spanish tiles, Stylnul being the largest and biggest tile producer in Spain. Other leading tile brands are Italy's ITS; Indonesia's Kia, Milan and Masterina; and Malaysia's Johann and Seacera tiles.

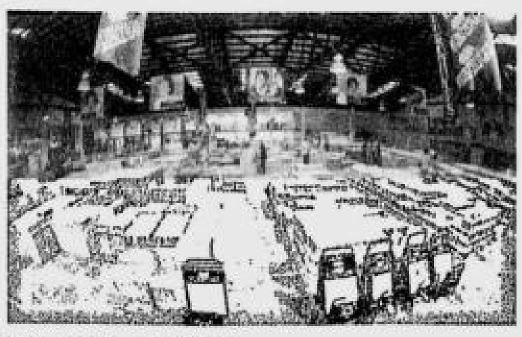
Federal Hardware also carries homogenous polished and unpolished tiles: Al Khaleej from Malaysia and Indonesia; laminate flooring from Hornitex and Hans from Germany and the best vinyl tile brands like Imperial and Kent. There is also a variety of paving tiles for outdoor requirements.

Leading top bathroom ware producers HCG and Royal Tern have created 22 modules to help customers in deciding how to match appropriate tiles with the corresponding bathroom wares. Federal Hardware is also the exclusive distributor of Western bathtubs and Mamoli showers and faucets, top Italian names in bathroom accessories.

Federal Hardware also carries the complete range of more than 100 designs and sizes of Eurotiles, the country's leading superior ceramic tiles.

Pleasurable experience

Federal Hardware has turned shopping for building and design needs into a pleasurable experience with American-style signaging and visual merchandising large in-store space that is fully air-conditioned and has high ceilings, well-organized product displays, a coffee shop and ample free parking space.



FEDERAL Hardware

The one-stop builder's destination does not only offer the best-value, high-quality hardware goods but also excellent service. Federal Hardware's professional sales team serves customers every day from 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. The center's interior designers can also assist shoppers in their building and design needs and requirements.

Realtors set gift-giving for Porac Aetas

THE NATIONAL Real Estate Association will distribute Christmas gift-goods tomorrow to the Aeta (Negritos) community of Sitio Banaba, Hacienda Dolores, Porac, Pampanga.

To be held in coordination with the Q.C. Silangan Lions Club and the Barangay Lions Club, the traditional NREA Christmas Gift-Giving will be held at the NREA-Jesclare chapel in the municipality.

The activity is part of NREA's annual pilgrimage to the site, where the organization built a community chapel on May 1, 1996, the year when lahar mudflows stopped in the area, according to engineer Roy Beating, NREA chair for special projects.

The one-day activity, chaired by treasurer Frank Mendoza of the NREA outreach program committee, will be preceded by a Thanksgiving Mass at 11 a.m. to be celebrated by Rev. Fr. Emil Dizon of Porac Parish.

Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, a NREA honorary member who also assisted in the construction of the Jesclare chapel, has been invited to grace the occasion.

Leading the pilgrimage are NREA officials Ka Pepe Manalad, Tars Pacheco, Dante Liban, Reynaldo Carpio, Celia Umali, Flavio Calma, Lourdes Estacio, Ruben Palacio Jr., "Tar's Angels" and Malou Aguila.

Federal Chemicals plans initial public offering

FEDERAL Chemicals Inc., manufacturer of quality household chemicals, recently signed the underwriting agreement for its initial public offering with RCBC Capital Corp.

Federal Chemicals' most popular product, Fedseal, is a proof of the company's capability to provide the Philippine market with high-quality products.

The company continues to pursue its mission and vision to give more value for money to Filipino consumer.

Signatories to the agreement Federal Chemicals chair Wilfred Co and president Charles Kwa, Philippine Stock Exchange SVP Jose Cervantes and RCBC Capital president Raul Leopondo.

Environment expert tags indoor air pollution as 'hidden enemy'

HOMEOWNERS and building administrators must pay attention to the quality of their indoor air before it's too late.

That was the essence of the message delivered by Prof. Gerry Parco, environmental engineer from the College of Engineering, University of the Philippines, Diliman at a symposium about indoor air quality held recently at the Club Filipino, Greenhills.

Parco was the featured speaker on the topic "Indoor Air Quality: Fighting the Hidden Enemy" sponsored by 3M—a global company excelling in the research and development field and creating thousands of helpful innovations.

Indoor environment

Parco acquainted guests with the often taken for granted aspect of the indoor environment and stressed the importance of giving it the necessary attention usually given only to the outdoor air environment.

He noted that in some sites, 80 to 90 percent of indoor air is circulated back into the room that may then contain all kinds of harmful microparticles. Thus, indoor air can be 2 to 5 times more polluted than outdoor air. Sometimes, it may even be 100 times higher in seriously contaminated environments, he said, quoting the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Pollution sources such as pets, combustion appliances, chemicals, cigarette smoke and soil under and around buildings can contribute to the harmful substances in indoor air, Parco revealed. Buildings with poor ventilation often result in Sick Building Syndrome, a phenomenon that manifests in a spread of discomfort and health problems among inhabitants of an afflicted building. Airborne particles can be reduced with the use of certain filters or air purification techniques, Parco said.

Reducing pollution

Meanwhile, Karen Pongos, 3M sales manager of construction and home improvement market, mentioned three approaches for reducing indoor air pollution. One is to control the source of indoor air pollutants by eliminating smoking indoors, keeping pets outside or keeping humidity low with the use of air-conditioners. Total elimination of the source of pollutants is not always possible though, she warned.

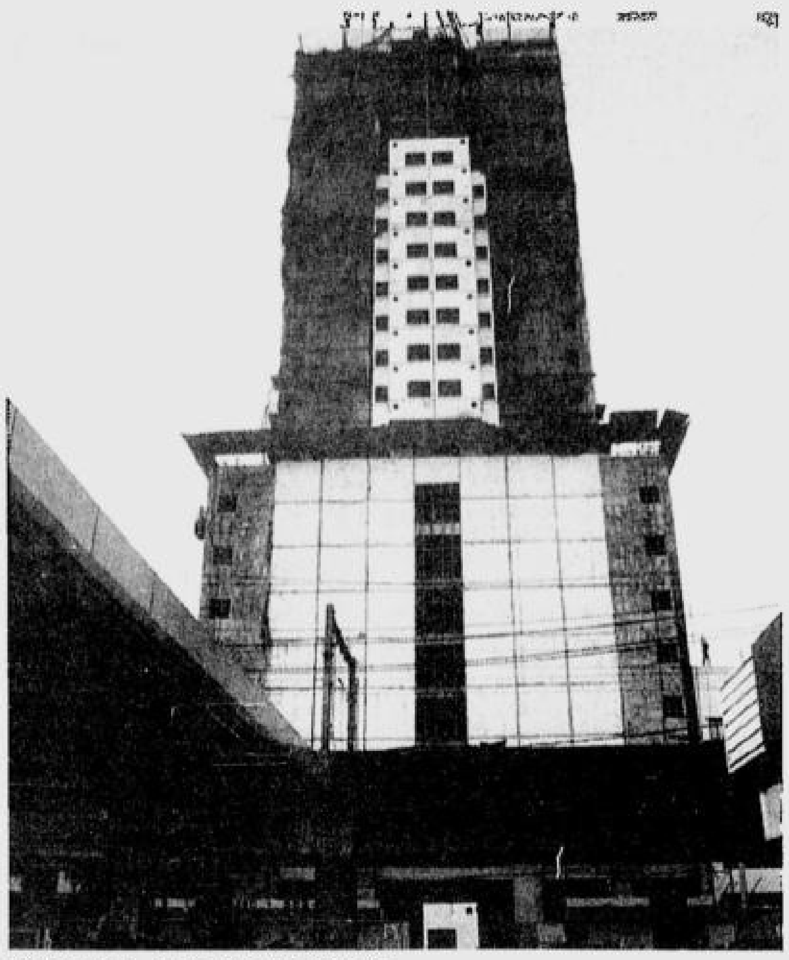
Pongos suggested opening windows, doors or the use of exhaust fans as some practical solutions as these dilute unwanted airborne irritants indoor. She noted, however, that opening windows and doors could also invite outdoor pollution, heat and humidity to come in and add to the problem.

Special filters

Pongos said that one of the practical and economical approach is to clean the air by using filters for the ventilation systems. One such filter is 3M Filtrete aircon filter, a high-efficiency product that gives clean indoor air because of its electrostatically charged fibers that act like magnets to trap microparticles. These special filters prevent pollutants from circulating back into the air, thus reducing the harmful elements in the atmosphere that could trigger respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, rhinitis and other allergies.

Building administrators, doctors, nurses and aircon technicians of different Metro Manila schools and hospitals attended the symposium.

The IAQ symposium is just the first of a series of activities undertaken by 3M Filtrete to fulfill its mission of educating the public about the need to clean indoor air at home, schools, offices and buildings.



PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

The Taft Tower is a residential cum office condominium beside De La Salle University on Taft Avenue, Manila. The construction of the project by E. Ganzon Inc. is now on the 22nd floor as of Nov. 15. The topping-off ceremony is expected on Jan. 22 next year.

Empire East Properties opens Las Piñas sales office

AFFORDABLE housing developer Empire East Properties Inc. recently opened a sales office in Las Piñas to beef up the marketing of Governor's Hills, its flagship residential-commercial community project in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

Dubbed the Redwood branch office and located on Alabang-Zapote Road in Almanza I, near SM Southmall, it is the second satellite office to open this year after the first one in Dasmariñas, also in Cavite.

The company's strategic building of a sales network spanning key areas in Metro Manila and Cavite is geared toward decentralizing its sales and marketing operations in order to reach out to a wider customer base.

EEPI assistant vice president for sales and marketing Emil Perez Jr. said that the Las Piñas branch will complement the Dasmariñas branch in meeting the growing need for highly affordable housing due to the population and economic boom south of the metropolis.

EEPI's seasoned realtor Florencio Malaki heads a team of veteran sales directors that will oversee the day-to-day operations of the Redwood branch.

Empire East Properties is planning to put up additional satellite sales offices in key growth areas by the second half of next year, Perez said.

An international sales network covering the United States, the Netherlands and Singapore is in place to tap a huge overseas Filipino workers market, he said.

Governor's Hills, an 89-hectare integrated residential and commercial development, has started turning over completed units to homebuyers. It features a host of amenities including playgrounds, jogging paths, tennis and basketball courts, a swimming pool and a village clubhouse.

CONSTRUCTSCOPE

Liban new NREA president

CIVIC leader Dante V. Liban, three-time Quezon City congressman, was recently elected unopposed as national president of the National Real Estate Association for fiscal year 2002. Also elected were NREA founder Jose V. Manalad, board chair; Reynaldo Carpio, vice chair; Linda G. Tayengco, executive vice president; Celia Umali, VP-internal; Felino Palafox Jr., VP-external; and Benigno Gotoc Sr., VP-chapters; Ruben Palacio Jr., secretary general; Frank Mendoza, treasurer; Jaime Echeverria, auditor; and Marino Bacani, public relations officer. Lawyer Moises A. Balon, Col. Vicente M. Yordan, Armida A. Alaraz and Nestor S. Mangio were elected as trustees, with immediate past president Tars M. Pacheco as ex-officio trustee. Sen. Rodolfo Blazon, Congressmen Jose Solis and Eduardo Zialcita, Ruben Asuncion and Alexander Asuncion will serve as advisers.

New set of MBRI officers

THE MANILA Board of Realtors Inc. recently elected a new set of directors and officers. Elected were lawyer Apolinario A. Macalintal, president; Salvador Zerrudo, executive vice president; Diana Macavinta, vice president-external; Arturo Briones, VP-internal; Lourdes Lopez, secretary; Donna Concepcion, treasurer; and Jack Yu, auditor. Also elected as directors were Susan San Diego, George Fong and Merlyn Yu. They will hold office from Jan.1 up to Dec. 31 next year or until their successors are elected and qualified.

New associate director

LEADING international property consultants FPDSavills Philippines recently announced the appointment of Timm Vollbrecht as associate director for its commercial agency operations. Vollbrecht brings to FPDSavills nine years of professional experience and training in the real estate industry.

Clubhouse inauguration

THE CLUBHOUSE complex of Metrogate Silang Estates, a residential lot subdivision on Aguinaldo Highway in Silang, Cavite, was recently inaugurated. Metrogate Silang is a 250-hectare project planned for upper- and middle-income housing development. The clubhouse complex features facilities for active families, including an indoor basketball court, a golf academy with putting area and a gym with lockers and showers.

Erratum

THE HEADLINE of the Sta. Lucia Realty story should have read "Sta. Lucia Realty bares vision for town center." We regret the error.

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BUSINESS

BSP to change NPL policy

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is revamping its policy on provisions that banks must set aside to cover for bad loans.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said in an interview that the central bank would issue a circular trimming the levels of provisions for general loan losses to one percent from 2 percent; for substandard but secured loans, 10 percent from 12.5 percent; and, restructured loans, 5 percent.

Where it used to be zero, the BSP will start requiring banks to set aside a buffer fund for restructured loans.

Reyes said these new requirements should be neutral to banks or lead to minimal gains, as these would free up funds originally tied to general loan loss provisions.

The less restrictive requirements mean banks will have to set aside only a centavo for every peso in loan it extends as opposed to 2 centavos a peso worth of general loan loss provisions.

For every peso worth of substandard loans, banks will have to put up only 10 centavos instead of 12.5 centavos, but for every peso of restructured loans, a 5-centavo provision will have to be earmarked.

A substandard loan, according to the central bank's definition, involves a "substantial and unreasonable degree of risk."

Unsecured and substandard loans require a provision of 25 percent similar to non-performing loans.

"We have to evaluate the riskier types of activities, and we believe that restructured loans have become riskier because these types were being doctored, in some cases, just to show that the balance sheet is clean," Reyes said.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said a lower provision on general loan losses that would be at par with international standards should help spur credit growth.

As of the third quarter, the total loans extended by the commercial banking sector have declined by 1.8 percent to P1.256 trillion and by 1.7 percent compared with P1.278 trillion a year earlier.

Of the total loans, banks have to set aside more than P25 billion in general loan loss provisions.

The general loan loss provision level of 2 percent, according to Buenaventura, was implemented by the central bank during the Asian financial crisis to help bolster banks' reserves in anticipation that borrowers would have a hard time paying their debts.

The restrictive policy, he said, served its purpose. The intention of the BSP now is to focus the required provisions on loan components that have remained problematic like restructured loans and NPLs, he added.

Buenaventura, however, said the easing of the general provision might not necessarily translate to an increase in bank credit. The central bank had already given up on a projected 10-percent growth in loans this year.

Jollibee group yearend earnings to hit ₱1.02B

By Christine A. Gaylican

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp.'s earnings will hit P1.02 billion by year's end following increases in its April-December sales, according to investment bank ING Barings.

In its latest assessment of locally listed companies, ING said Jollibee's store expansion program and earnings from its ChowKing fast-food chain will allow the company to post a 13-percent growth in revenues from last year's P907 million.

"Jollibee will be able to maintain its strong store sales growth for the rest of the year, with its value pricing strategy on its saleable product lines," ING said.

It said Jollibee's revenues would flow from company-owned stores, one-time franchise fees, royalties and commissary sales from franchisees.

Jollibee operates four franchises: Chinese fast-food chain ChowKing, pizza and pasta chain Greenwich, burger chain Jollibee, and deli and sandwiches chain Delifrance.

ING noted that ChowKing's sales performance from January to October and its new product lines continued to exceed expectations.

"With modest competition in its segment, there is more room for growth for ChowKing," it said.

Jollibee has set a target of putting up 50 stores this year.

Jollibee purchasing manager Sammy Dalisay said Jollibee would pursue store and brand reengineering for its ChowKing and Greenwich brands.

Dalisay said political uncertainties and a weak domestic economy took their toll on Jollibee's store expansion program. The company was able to put up only 24 Jollibee and two Greenwich stores last year, he disclosed.

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No taboos when it comes to swimsuits

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TIM YAP

"BIKINIS are a girl's best friend..."

ONCE the female form is adorned with a small piece of fabric, war is waged, so you better be ready.

Gone are the tacky times when the standard beachwear was a giant, wet T-shirt and skimpy shorts. It's the same as going to the sandy shores to sunbathe only during summer. For hardcore beach bums, summer lasts all year round, and the pool, beach or ocean is only a hop, skip or ride away.

This entrepreneurs Isabel Engwa and Amanda Griffin know only too well so they've made a bid to capture that market with the launch of their new swimwear retail store, Tabu, which is located at the Greenbelt Plaza in Makati. Griffin is, of course, more popularly known as HerBench's Her Majesty.

The launch, which was held at

NO/ p.C4

SPARKLING SET. Rajo Laurel's bikini made of Swarovski crystals

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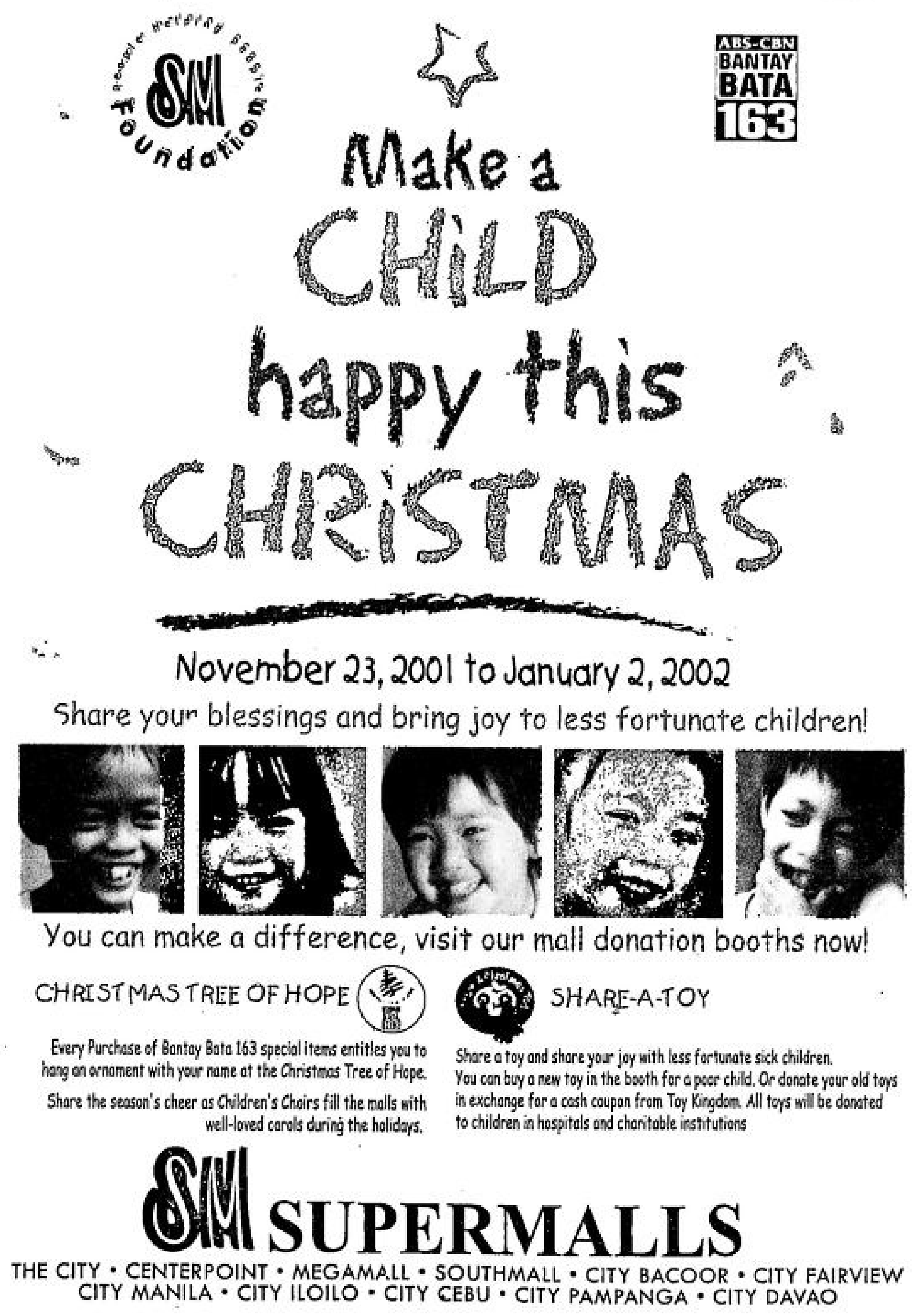
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November 23, 2001 to January 2, 2002

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Per DTI permit no. 1939 series of 2001. See flyers for details.

SMART Simply Amazing!

Controlling excess Christmas calories

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Aboitiz Juan

Be creative so you can enjoy eating holiday treats without accumulating unwanted calories

IT'S hard enough to control calories during the rest of the year but it can be a real struggle during Christmas. It takes a tremendous amount of willpower to say no to all the yummy stuff that is practically shoved in your face during parties or given to you as gifts.

I'm not a great fan of willpower mainly because I don't have much of it. In a battle of will between an *ensaymada* and myself, I know from past experience who the loser will be. That's why I have had to learn other ways to keep excess calories under control without having to put my willpower to the test.

I have successfully used these strategies for the last 20 years to maintain my weight without having to feel deprived during the holiday season. After all, life is no fun if you can't have chocolate cake every now and then.

The tips I am about to share are not new. In fact, I include them in my column every December but readers still ask me to write about them because, as one reader put it, "We need to be reminded again and again." Choose the ones you think will work for you and can fit your lifestyle.

Write down what you eat

Your goal is to maintain your weight or gain as little as possible but still enjoy some of the goodies that come your way.

It is possible to lose weight during the Christmas season (it's been proven in a research study by Tufts University) if you commit yourself to keeping a food diary where you write down everything you eat and monitor your intake. Writing down what you eat just for this season is not a bad idea even if you don't intend to lose weight because seeing what you ate in black-and-white helps to keep you from going overboard.

I personally don't use this method because I have become such an expert at keeping a mental scoreboard but I have found it very useful in the past.

Party calories

Excess calories come in two forms: party calories and gift calories. Let's start with strategies to deal with party calories.

- Never go to a party hungry. That will be committing suicide. You might as well throw in the towel because you can't argue with a hungry stomach. Eat something filling but low in calories before the party. Clear broth soups like *sotanghon* or *tinola* are good suggestions. Fruits also help control the appetite. By keeping a damper on your hunger, you can make wiser choices at the buffet table.
- Eat only the food that you really like. Why waste your calories on dishes that don't make you salivate? If you are the type who likes everything, your best defense will be to eat small portions.
- Sweets and desserts are caloric-dense foods. They come in small packages but pack a caloric wallop so eating small portions is the cornerstone of having your cake and eating it, too. At a recent Christmas lunch, I was faced with a dilemma. I had to choose between two delicious desserts—cheesecake and banana cream pie. I decided to get an extra small portion of both so both slices would still equal a relatively small slice. It was a smart move because both desserts were fantastic.
- Eat slowly. Take your time and savor the food. If you gulp your food down, you can be fooled into thinking you are still hungry when actually your stomach has had enough but your taste buds are still crying out for more flavor.
- Avoid impulsive second serving decisions by taking a 15-minute break between servings. You will be surprised at how often you decide that you don't want any more food. If you are really serious, drink hot tea while you are waiting or even better, go to the bathroom and brush your teeth.
- Save calories by drinking water instead of sugary juice drinks or soft drinks. You save 300 calories by drinking plain old H_2O instead of two soft drinks. What you do with your "savings" is up to you. For example, you could spend them on a slice of cake or ham.
- Not only can the calories from alcoholic drinks pile up really quickly without your realizing it, but alcohol also loosens the inhibitions, including the appetite. People eat more when they drink alcohol.

Here is a guide to approximate caloric counts for common drinks. You decide what kind of adjustments you want to make.

- You could water down your hard drinks, nurse your drinks to make them last longer or have a glass of water in between drinks to space them out (this is a good idea because alcohol has a dehydration effect on the body).
- Red or white wine is about 105 calories a glass. Regular beer is 150 calories for 12 ounces. Light beer is 100 calories for the same amount. Hard drinks are 125 calories for one shot if 100 proof and 100 calories if 80 proof. Cocktails can range from 150-250 calories. Most sweet or syrupy liqueurs are 70-100 calories per ounce.

ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

Gift calories

Food is the easiest gift to give. It's generic. The whole family can enjoy it. It's really a no-brainer gift. And that's why you get bombarded with food gifts every year.

We also do our share by giving food as gifts to our friends. Fruits are a great gift to give or receive because they are relatively low in calories but winners in the nutritional department. However, most gifts are loaded with fat and sugar calories.

Here's what you can do to protect yourself.

All the other tips mentioned about party calories, like eat slowly, taste only the food you really like, eat small portions, and wait 15 minutes between servings, work for gift calories, too. The difference is that, once you leave the party, the temptation is no longer there. But gift calories are very tempting because you know they are in the refrigerator waiting for you. That's why it is important to find a way to get rid of them fast.

If you have a gigantic household, you shouldn't have much of a problem because the gifts will magically vanish by themselves. I have many people at home, so my instructions to my household are to save me one slice each of my favorites and demolish the rest.

However, if you aren't that many at home, I suggest giving the excess to the less fortunate. You can give them to a nearby charity or just bring them in your car and play Santa Claus to the many street children. You can also bring them to your office and pass the calories on to your officemates.

Burning calories

If you are already exercising regularly, I encourage you not to stop during this season because you need every bit of calorie burning you can get your hands on, to balance out the excess calories that will surely come your way. In fact, if you can, do a little more.

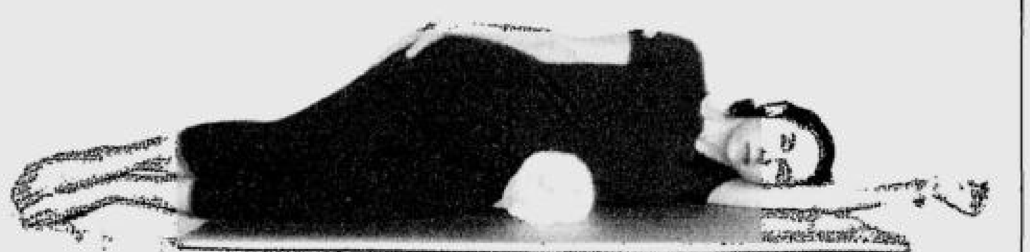
I told the students in my aerobics class that we would do an extra 10 minutes every day during the cardio portion of the class (the portion where you burn the most number of calories) to help make up for those Christmas calories. Every little bit helps.

Don't forget to increase your informal exercise time, too. This means activities of daily living like walking, climbing stairs, house cleaning, gardening. Increasing informal exercise time is how people who are not on a formal exercise program can get physically active.

How to do it? Climb a few extra flights of stairs a day. Walk an extra round or two at the mall. Take five-minute walking breaks at the office. Walk around your neighborhood at night to enjoy the cool air and look at all the Christmas lights. Be creative so you can enjoy eating those holiday treats without accumulating unwanted calories.

For questions and past articles or exercises, go to http://www.tinajuanfitness.com

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK



Lying side crunch

STRENGTHENS and tightens the obliques, muscles that criss-cross the waist.

Equipment:
Exercise mat and pillow or rolled-up towel.

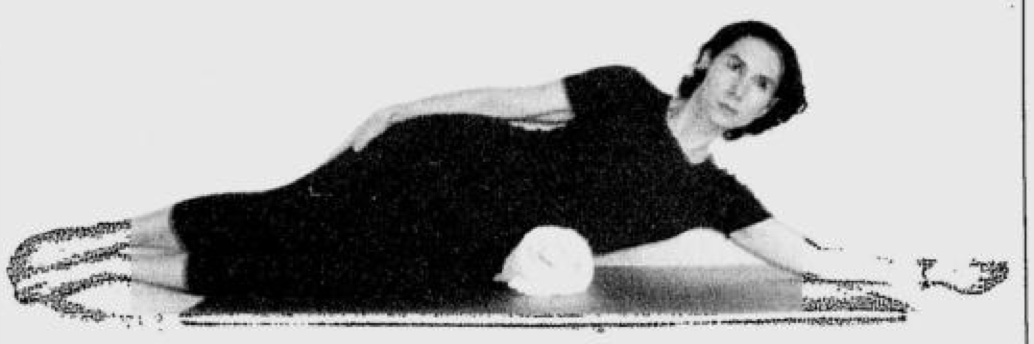
Exercise technique:

1. Lie on your side with a pillow or rolled-up towel under your waist. Your hips and knees should be slightly bent. Your head should be resting on your bottom arm. Place your top arm on your thigh.
2. Contract your abdominal muscles and squeeze your shoulder blades together as you lift your upper body off the floor. Your hand should slide down your thigh. Slowly lower yourself to starting position.

Performance tips:

1. Keep your legs anchored on the floor as you lift your upper body.
2. Exhale as you lift up; inhale as you lower down.
3. Initiate the movement by contracting your abdominal muscles and squeezing the shoulder blades together rather than trying to throw yourself up with momentum.
4. Focus on bringing the bottom of your ribcage toward the top of your hipbone. Move slowly—two counts going up and two counts going down.

Repetitions:
Do 10-15 repetitions on each side. Rest. Do another set if you want to.



Take Charge Doc!
Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.
MEDICard

Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA every Tuesday.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

Is maternity care included in my healthcare program?
Services for maternity care, such as prenatal and postnatal consultations, laboratory exams and services for conditions as a result of pregnancy are not covered under our standard healthcare program. However, for big group and corporate clients, this benefit may be extended to its employees and even their spouses, but is subject to certain limits and provisions negotiated.

Meet your MEDICard Team

Since 1996, Orthopedic specialist **Dr. Dennis Wee** has been addressing the health needs of MEDICard members at St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC). Dr. Wee is a graduate of Medicine from UST. He had his residency training for his specialization at SLMC and as a Visiting Spine Fellow in Seoul Korea, earned his subspecialization training on lumbar spine ailments. Doc Dennis currently holds a Fellowship degree to the Philippine College of Surgeons and the Philippine Orthopedic Association. Outside of his practice, he is an avid fan of basketball and spend his free time enjoying the sport. For your consultation needs, visit Dr. Dennis Wee at room 608 of SLMC, Mondays to Fridays from 2 to 5 PM, also during Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 AM to 12 noon and on Saturdays from 10 AM to 3 in the afternoon.

Contract Signing

MEDICard
PHILIPPINES, INC

SIEMENS, INC./ETSI TECHNOLOGIES, INC. recently signed its renewal corporate agreement with MEDICard for the healthcare program of its employees and their dependents. Present during the ceremonies were (Sitting L-R) Dr. Nicky S. Montoya (MEDICard Medical Director), Mr. Luis S. Montoya (MEDICard EVP & GM), Dr. Nicanor D. Montoya (MEDICard President), Mr. Renato L. Serapio (SIEMENS VP for HR) and Mr. Arnold Z. David (ETSI Tech. AVP-HR/TQM); (Standing L-R) Mr. Voltaire R. Victoria (MEDICard Marketing & Sales Manager), Ms. Lourdes P. Dadia & Ms. Marlyn C. Ortego (MEDICard Corporate Account Managers), Ms. Lydia Therese S. Rivera (SIEMENS HRD Asst. & Company Nurse), Ms. Marina Posadas (ETSI Tech. Section Head-Employee Relations) and Ms. Emilie S. Delugon (ETSI Tech. HR Specialist).

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com.

For individual or family membership inquiries, please call 818-2161 and look for Ms. Joy Mendiola. For group or corporate membership, please call 817-5136, 817-4985 or 817-5127 and look for a membership consultant.

TEXT MEDICard for your queries: 0917-7518365 (Globe) or 0919-2476240 (Smart). Please don't forget to include your complete name and landline number where MEDICard could reach you. ***Log on to www.medicardphils.com***

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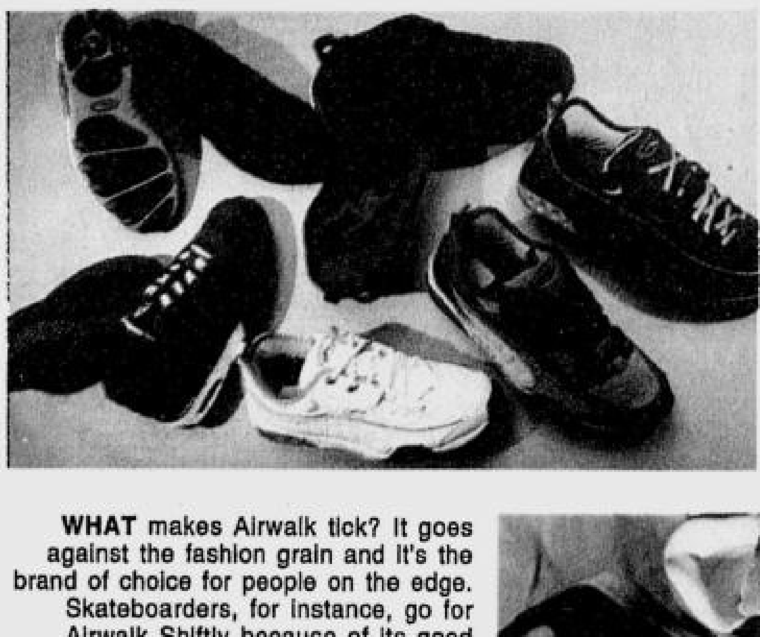
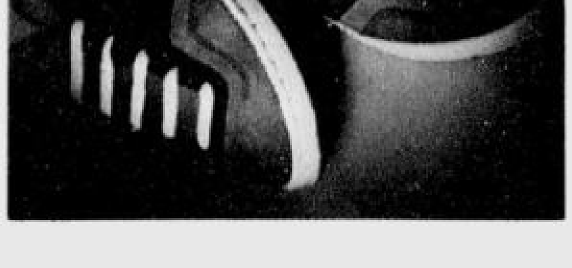
Gear up for the active life



RIDE high with Vans' foot fashion collection this Christmas. Vans sneakers' design and strength should gear you up for your alternative sports forays. Each pair is technologically advanced and fully functional. Distributed locally by R.S.H. Marketing (Phils.) Inc., Vans shoes and apparel are available at all leading department stores, sports and footwear retail outlets.

WHAT makes Airwalk tick? It goes against the fashion grain and it's the brand of choice for people on the edge. Skateboarders, for instance, go for Airwalk Shiftly because of its good gum sole and shock-absorbing features. Airwalk is available at Airwalk/Outland boutique in SM Southmall, The Airwalk Shop at SM City, the Airwalk/Outland Depot at The Outlet Yard, the Airwalk Value Shop at Molvina Commercial Complex in Antipolo and at leading shoe stores nationwide.



ANDY Uffels shows how easily a woman can fashion out her own hairstyle for any occasion. This do-it-yourself hairdo is from Uffels' Pantene 2002 Hairstyle Collection.

Season of sleek and shiny hair

MULTIAWARDED international hairdresser and Pantene artistic director Andy Uffels has unveiled a collection of party hairstyles for the festive season.

Uffels' Pantene 2002 Hairstyle Collection is a set of chic but easy-to-do hairstyles that most women can do themselves. Such hairstyles vary from the simple to the sophisticated.

This end-look is showcased by each hairstyle in the Pantene Collection designed by Uffels, the Dutch Hairdresser of the Year 2000 and 2001.

For Uffels' do-it-yourself hairstyles, the models used Pantene Pro-V Smooth and Silky shampoo and conditioner to turn limp and dull hair looking sleek, shiny and healthy.

Always in fashion, Simply Straight and Sleek is the best of hairstyles if you want to give your hair a mirror-like effect.

The Invisible Chignon is for those who are bored of long hair but are not willing to cut it short.

SIMPLE but effective, this Simply Straight and Sleek style is always in fashion, no matter what you're wearing or where you're going.

This style flatters your head shape and highlights the oval of your face.

On the other hand, the Sleek Sculptural style is smooth, sleek, elegantly looped with intricate design. It's "sculpted" hair for very special occasions.

A SHOWSTOPPER, this Sleek Sculptural style is your best bet if you feel up to some drama and unusual sophistication.

How much pain should we endure?

PAIN—of the muscle, low back, neck, joint—, is the usual complaint of people nowadays.

Due to today's fast-paced and competitive lifestyle, pain and fatigue are not taken seriously. They often are dismissed as just a result of a hard day's work or lack of sleep. Many fail to speak about their pain, fearful of medicine and its side effects. Employers and the health-care system sometimes make pain care their least priority.

However, people suffering these kinds of pain will get better help if they speak out. Pain specialists can help them understand their condition and recommend the next course of action. These days, to improve muscle fitness and reduce muscle pain, doctors no longer prescribe simple bed rest and aerobic exercise like swimming and walking.

Physiatrists are specialists in diagnosing and treating problems of the musculoskeletal system. They perform thorough physical examinations to find the source of pain, injury or disability, even when standard diagnostic tests don't reveal specific problems. Because of their aggressive, nonsurgical approach to pain and injury, physiatrists are the ideal choice for the treatment of a wide variety of diseases and health conditions.

Dr. Ferdinand F. Santos, a physiatrist from the Fatima School of Medicine, can be consulted on pain and its management. E-mail him at doctorgeorge.com.

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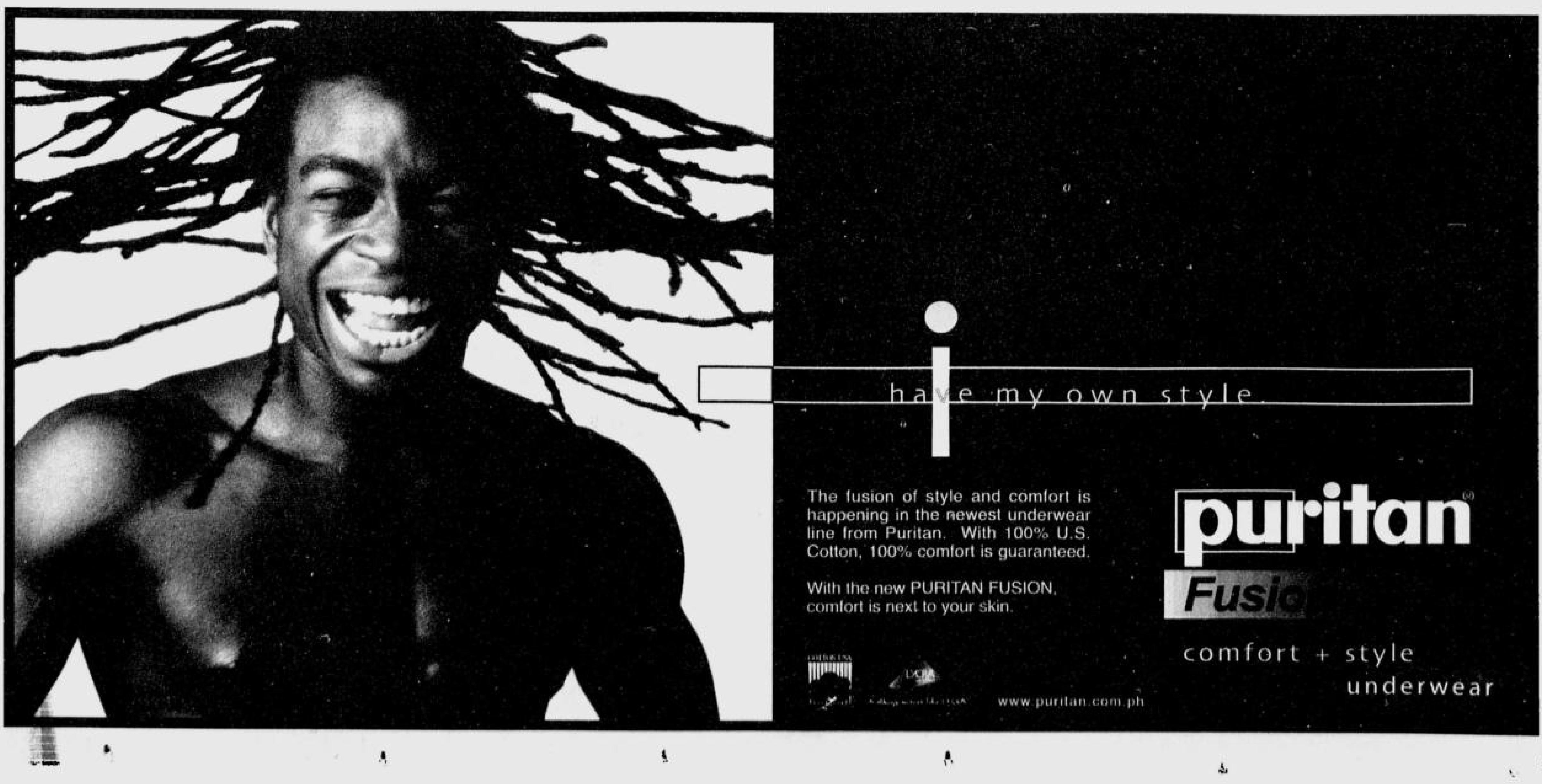

The fusion of style and comfort is happening in the newest underwear line from Puritan. With 100% U.S. Cotton, 100% comfort is guaranteed.

With the new PURITAN FUSION, comfort is next to your skin.

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comfort + style underwear

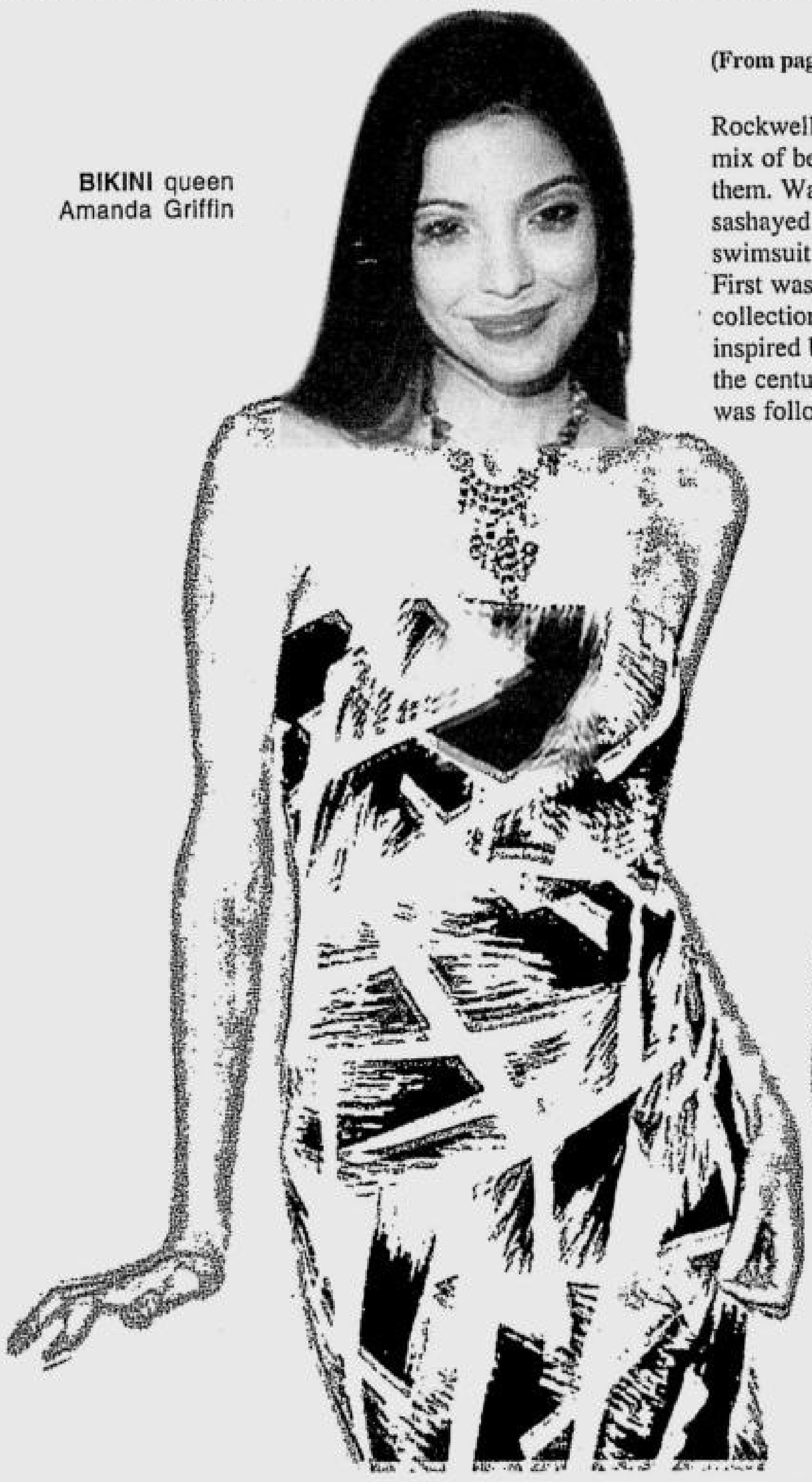
CAN the men be far behind? Mumph Ruiz, Fritz Webb, Raji Mata and DJ Robert Villaluz

SWEET CHARITY. Host Bianca Araneta whose foundation is the show's beneficiary

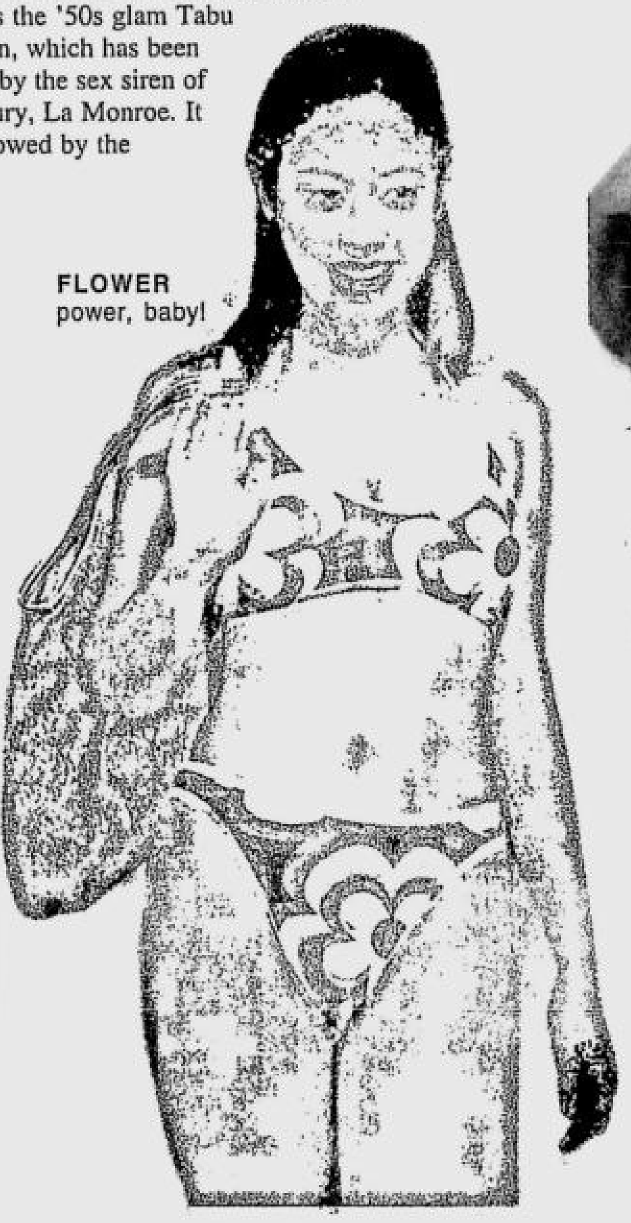
BOLD STAR. Prints dominate this collection.

No taboos when it comes to swimsuits

(From page C1)



BIKINI queen Amanda Griffin



FLOWER power, baby!

ARMED AND DANGEROUS. Tabu goes graphic.

Rockwell's Dish, showcased an interesting mix of beauties and the hunks who adored them. Wave after wave, bikini-clad babes sashayed onstage, each one wearing a swimsuit that gave their curves attitude. First was the '50s glam Tabu collection, which has been inspired by the sex siren of the century, La Monroe. It was followed by the Swinging Sixties' Bond girl—ultra cool, always shaken, never stirred.

An explosion of colors followed as flower power chicks descended on the ramp to represent the hippies' era. The '80s reminded audiences of the Studio 54 disco era while the '90s presented the grunge look. Alas, the new millennium reverberated with the Balearic beats of the Ibiza club culture—ole!

Beach gods with abs of steel Troy Montero and Marc Nelson joined the finale.

So whether you are heading to Bora, St. Tropez or Galera, don't do it without dropping by Tabu and checking out how to win the war.

Metallic hues and colors of the earth for the Mediterranean look in sunglasses

Men make passes at women who wear D&G glasses, and vice versa, because the precise styling creates an image both sensual and austere

HOLLYWOOD beauty Susan Sarandon looking glamorous in this ad for Dolce & Gabbana Glasses.

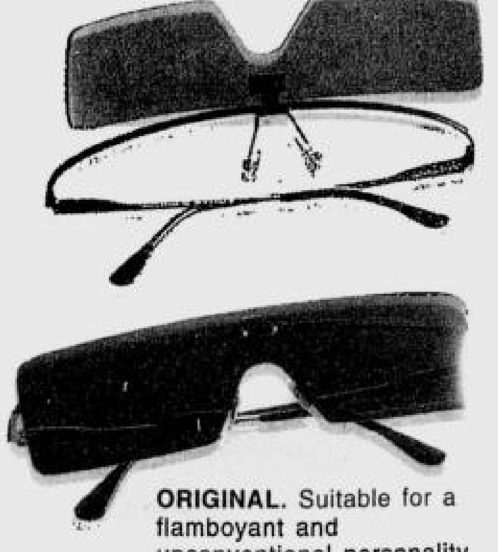
THE EXPRESSIVE and exuberant Dolce & Gabbana style has always considered sunglasses as partners, a perfect way of adding to and improving what we have to say about ourselves. Every aspect is studied down to the smallest detail and actually divides the history of this brand into precise periods, which can be defined and recognized as "Sicilian," "Dolce Vita," "Neorealism" and so on. Both in the women's and men's collections, sunglasses contribute toward communicating a look.

The Dolce & Gabbana sunglasses collection was designed with a precise style, one that creates an image both sensual and austere. The women sunglasses in acetate are inspired by the generous beauty of the southern Italian woman and clearly refer to Mediterranean colors and culture, in the footsteps of uncontainable beauties such as Sofia Loren and Anna Magnani.

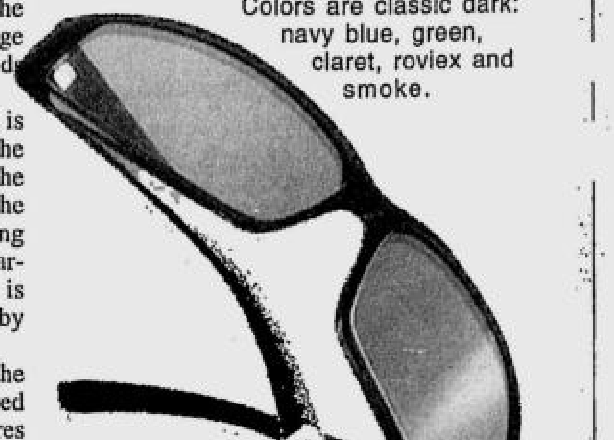
The models in metal feature an important profile, which transmits modernity and elegance, reflecting the requirements of women who, with their desire to change and stand out from the crowd, make other people dream. The color range is inspired by metallic hues, black volcanic sand and the colors of the Earth.

The men's sunglasses collection in acetate is inspired by the past, especially as regards the shapes, the originality of which bring to mind the Onassis years, the films of Woody Allen and the clothes of the '60s. The frames feature matching plain colors, almost as if they were lined garments; the outside is black while the inside is light brown and they are harmoniously united by a thin white lamina.

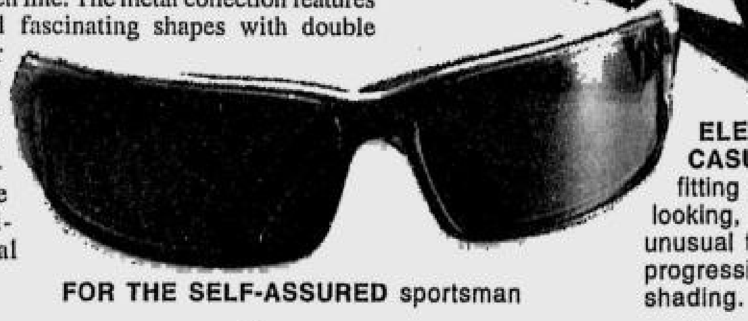
As for colors, the dark shades prevail in the men's collection while bright colors are preferred for the women line. The metal collection features stylish and fascinating shapes with double bridges or wide profiles. The glass lens is used together with the more traditional metal frames.



ORIGINAL. Suitable for a flamboyant and unconventional personality, these are perfect for going from sunlight to dark interiors. Colors are classic dark: navy blue, green, claret, roviex and smoke.

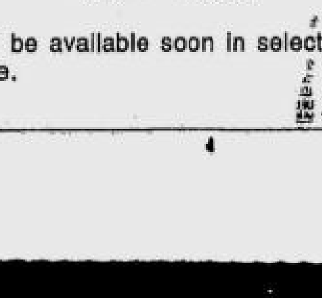


ELEGANT-CASUAL. Close-fitting and tough looking, this pair has unusual transparent progressive silver shading.



FOR THE SELF-ASSURED sportsman

ANGEL ON HIGH



There's Angel Aquino on a giant billboard on Edsa, looking bemused and enthralling, her mysterious gaze delicately concealed by Replay Eyes. She's there for the sole purpose of easing tension during traffic jams, according to the Replay people. Divine intervention, they say. But, admittedly, dangerous. Watch where you're heading. The Replay Eyes 2002 collection will be available soon in select premier optical stores nationwide.

Stay in shape at the malls this holiday

WITH THE EATING and merry-making this season, one has to make the effort to include activities that will help burn fat. Since many people will hit the malls for shopping and dining rather than the gym, why not make that time worthwhile?

Walk around as you canvas prices. Walking is recommended as a safe activity for health-at-risk persons. The air-conditioned environment in "no smoking" malls would be conducive. Doing it during off-hours brings more exercise.

Longer strolls are possible at the Power Plant Mall, which has extended its hours from 10 a.m.-10 p.m. everyday until Dec. 30.

For those who want something more athletic, visit Power Bowl, the mall's bowling and billiards center at the 3/L. A Learn-to-Bowl Clinic led by National Youth Team Coach Bonnie Solis will run from Dec. 26-30, 10:30 a.m.-12: 30 p.m.

The center offers special discounted rates until Dec. 31: bowling on 26 high-performance lanes for as low as P60 per game per person Mondays to Fridays, 10 a.m.-12 p.m; afternoon special rates at P80 on weekdays and P100 on weekends, 12-5 p.m.; evening special rates are just as low, 9 p.m. to closing hours.

Billiard rates have been reduced to P100 per hour for the nonsmoking area and kids' tables.

Call Power Bowl at 898-1624.

Free endoscopy exam

HEALTHWAY Medical Clinics-Binondo offers free consultations with an otolaryngologist to help one know his potential risks for developing nasal and sinus disorders. HMC-Binondo also gives free rigid endoscopy with video monitor to detect if one is suffering from sinusitis, rhinitis, nasal polyp, laryngitis and other nasal and sinus problems.

According to Dr. Joseph Lopez, a resident otolaryngologist of HMC-Binondo, rigid endoscopy allows excellent visualization of all nasal structures where abnormalities responsible for nasal and sinus diseases can be found. He further notes that rigid endoscopy provides a painless yet accurate diagnosis for nasal and sinus disorders.

Interested patients can avail of these free medical services until Dec. 22, Monday to Saturday, 3-5 p.m., at HMC-Binondo, 2/F Paramount Building, Quintin Paredes, Binondo, Manila. Call 241-2066/2250.

Special giveaways

UNTIL Dec. 31, The Travel Club will be giving away foldable shopping bags for every minimum single-receipt purchase worth P3,000 of any regular priced product. The bags come in exciting colors of purple and magenta. Travel Club boutiques are at the SM City, SM City Cebu, SM Iloilo, SM Megamall, SM Manila, Glorietta 4, Alabang Town Center, Harrison Plaza, Ayala Center Cebu and Shangri-La Edsa Plaza.

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DRAW 1 (Re-load from Dec.1 -Dec.16) December 19, 2001	60 Nike caps	20 Nike bags	5 Nike watches
DRAW 2 [illegible] January 7, 2002	60 Penshoppe gift packs/gift certificates (P1,000)	20 Penshoppe gift certificates (P2,000)	5 Penshoppe gift certificates (P4,000)
DRAW 3 [illegible] January 15, 2002	60 Killer Loop sunglasses	20 Killer Loop sunglasses	5 Rayban sunglasses
DRAW 4 [illegible] January 30, 2002	60 Sony CD Walkmans	20 Aiwa Stereo CD components	5 Sony VCD Walkmans
GRAND DRAW February 6, 2002			
1ST PRIZE:	Dining Room Showcase	Bedroom Showcase	Living Room Showcase with Home Theatre
2ND PRIZE:	Aiwa DVD player with monitor	Sony Flat TV/JVC DVD Component	Sony Flat TV/Sony Handycam and Sony DVD Component
3RD PRIZE:	Full Mountain Bike	Schwinn Mountain Bike	Vespa scooter
CONSOLATION PRIZE:	60 SM gift checks (P2,500)	20 SM gift checks (P5,000)	5 SM gift checks (P10,000)

You can win Nike caps, bags and watches!
Be one of 85 winners on our December 19, 2001 draw,
kaya load na nang load sa Talk 'N Text cellphone mo!

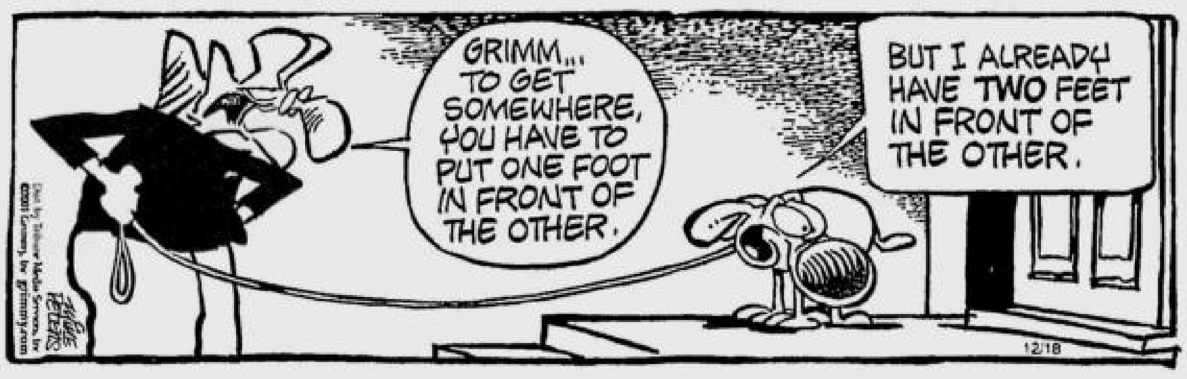
Kaya keep on loading Talk 'N Text cards for
more chances of winning in the Grand Draw!

In cooperation with Nike

Iba ang galing without overspending!

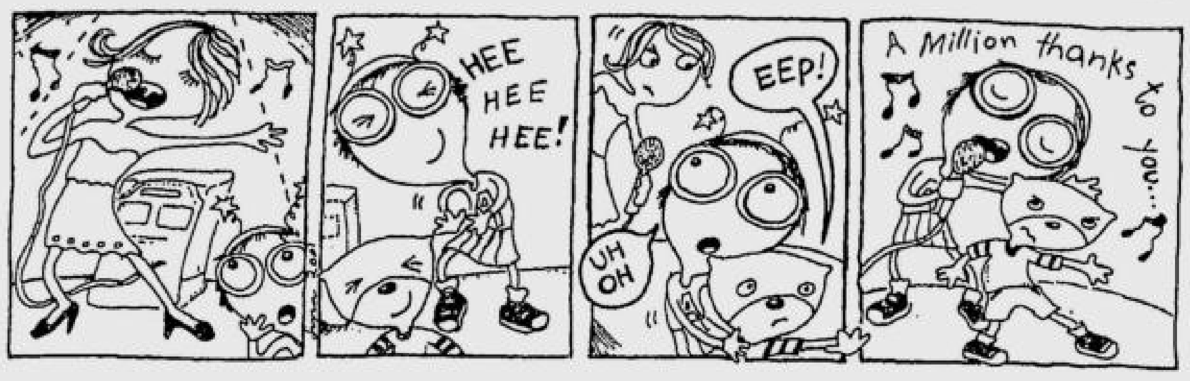
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


GRIMM... TO GET SOMEWHERE, YOU HAVE TO PUT ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER.
BUT I ALREADY HAVE TWO FEET IN FRONT OF THE OTHER.
12/18

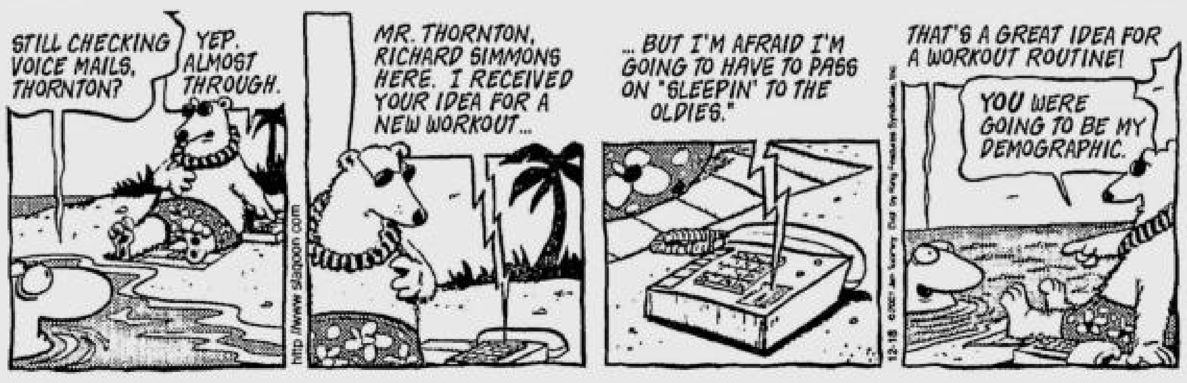
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HEE HEE HEE!
EEP!
UH OH
A Million thanks to you...

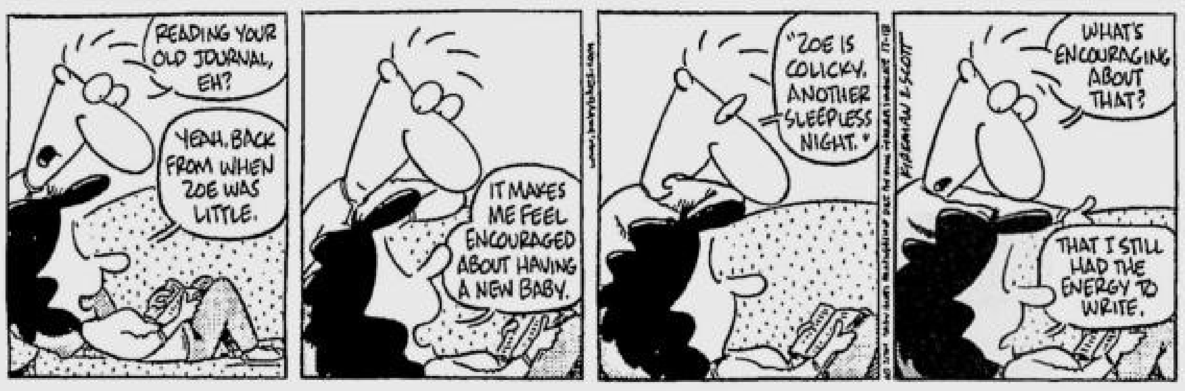
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


STILL CHECKING VOICE MAILS, THORNTON?
YEP. ALMOST THROUGH.
MR. THORNTON, RICHARD SIMMONS HERE. I RECEIVED YOUR IDEA FOR A NEW WORKOUT...
... BUT I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO PASS ON "SLEEPIN' TO THE OLDIES."
THAT'S A GREAT IDEA FOR A WORKOUT ROUTINE!
YOU WERE GOING TO BE MY DEMOGRAPHIC.
http://www.slagoon.com
12-18

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


READING YOUR OLD JOURNAL, EH?
YEAH. BACK FROM WHEN ZOE WAS LITTLE.
IT MAKES ME FEEL ENCOURAGED ABOUT HAVING A NEW BABY.
"ZOE IS COLICKY. ANOTHER SLEEPLESS NIGHT."
WHAT'S ENCOURAGING ABOUT THAT?
THAT I STILL HAD THE ENERGY TO WRITE.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Keith Richards, Steven Spielberg, Brad Pitt, Christina Aguilera

Happy Birthday: You will have many opportunities to get ahead this year. Slow down, focus and decide what's most important to you. The future is ripe with exciting possibilities for you and your business ventures. Your numbers are 8, 14, 21, 24, 33, 38

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Protect yourself and your interests. Take the initiative and get the things done that are most important to you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): This may be the season for work-related parties but be careful not to damage your reputation. Someone you look up to will have a strong influence on you; make sure that this person is worthy of your dedication.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Your unique ideas and cool way of doing things will bring you added popularity. Plan to do a little traveling to visit friends.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Your patience will be required if you want to deal with any problems that you have before year-end. Accept changes that are impossible to avoid.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): It's time to take action regarding partnerships that have gone astray. Be congenial and fess up to whatever mistakes you may have made.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You have the power to do whatever you want and you don't have to please anyone but yourself. Go in the direction that suits you best and you will find happiness.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You can address issues that have been bothering you. Your intuitive ability will help you make the right choices.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Don't be so hard on yourself. Make do with what you have and don't worry about trying to do more than you can financially.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Decide what you want to do and make plans to follow your dreams in the New Year. Sign up to go back to school if it will help you reach your goals.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You'll be right on target when it comes to your financial calculations. Your caution will keep you from spending more than you should.

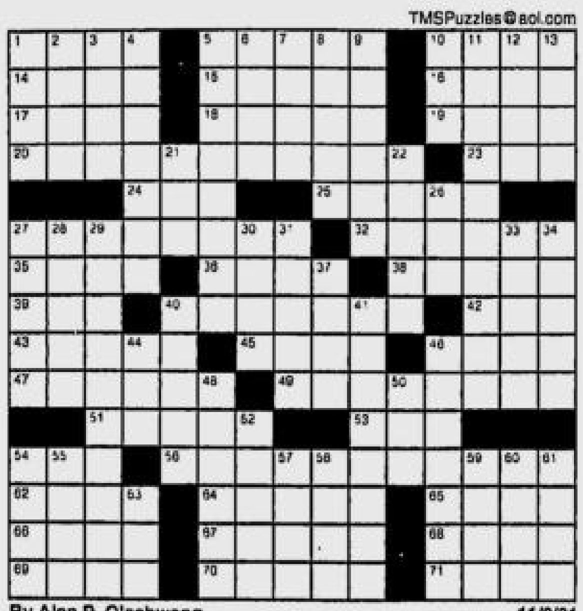
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): It's time to take your life into your own hands. Use your discipline and fortitude to get moving in a direction that you feel will bring you the highest returns.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Enjoy getting out with friends and family but you need to be careful while driving or dealing with authority figures. Make sure that your personal papers are in order if you are planning to take a trip.

Birthday Baby: You are curious and eager to prove yourself to the world. You are ambitious, persistent and willing to work hard. You have a creative flair that will help you to stand out.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

11/2/01

ACROSS
1 Wild guess
5 Honored the flag
10 Pine
14 Type of duck?
15 Opening remark
16 Portal
17 Nerve impulse transmitter
18 Cuban boy in 2000 news
19 Self-righteously complacent
20 Start of Josh Billings quote
23 In favor of
24 Antagonist
25 Civil Rights movement town
27 People of the distant past
32 Fishing nets
35 Castle defense
36 Showdown time?
38 Golfer Stewart
39 Miller or Jillian
40 Take back
42 Roses' place
43 Therefore
45 Younger Saarinen
46 Reliable
47 Bar perches
49 Moore or Rodin
51 Double
53 Liberal or conservative starter
54 Coming-out gal
56 End of quote
62 Conception
64 To the point
65 Heavy reading?
66 Culture base
67 Grouchy
68 Bedside pitcher
69 Harp family member
70 Overdoes the publicity
71 Writer Ayn

DOWN
1 Criticize severely
2 Hack
3 Andy's partner
4 Fund-raiser
5 North Dakota river
6 Recount
7 Potpourri
8 Five kings of Norway
9 Recipients
10 Madison Ave. offerings
11 Part 2 of quote
12 Part of a diurnal cycle
13 Consequently: Lat.
21 Shad delicacy
22 Enjoyed a siesta
26 Mama __!
27 Indian nursemaids
28 Song for nine voices
29 Part 3 of quote
30 Carry
31 Painful places
33 Juan's winter month
34 Passover feast
37 Pusher pursuer
40 Memento
41 Noblewoman
44 Heifer
46 Weightlifter's safeguard
48 Word with pine or tape
50 Island garland
52 Abrasive cloth
54 Gauge face
55 Tense
57 Stage gun
58 Latin being
59 Hawkeye state
60 Portent
61 Nudnik
63 Exist

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

S	T	E	P		D	A	F	T		M	O	W	E	D
U	R	G	E		U	C	L	A		A	D	E	L	E
R	I	G	S		C	R	U	X		R	E	L	I	C
F	O	O	T	T	H	E	B	I	L	L		L	O	O
			L	A	Y	S			E	I	G	H	T	Y
M	O	T	E	L			M	E	A	N	I	E		
E	L	O		C	A	V	E	R	N		N	E	M	O
L	E	E	K		C	A	R	G	O		S	L	A	B
T	O	T	E		U	N	I	O	N	S		E	G	O
		H	E	L	M	E	T			A	N	D	I	E
T	E	E	P	E	E			R	A	G	E			
O	I	L		A	N	K	L	E	D	E	E	P	I	N
A	D	I	O	S		H	O	L	E		D	I	C	E
S	E	N	S	E		A	S	A	P		E	N	O	S
T	R	E	S	S		N	E	X	T		D	E	N	T

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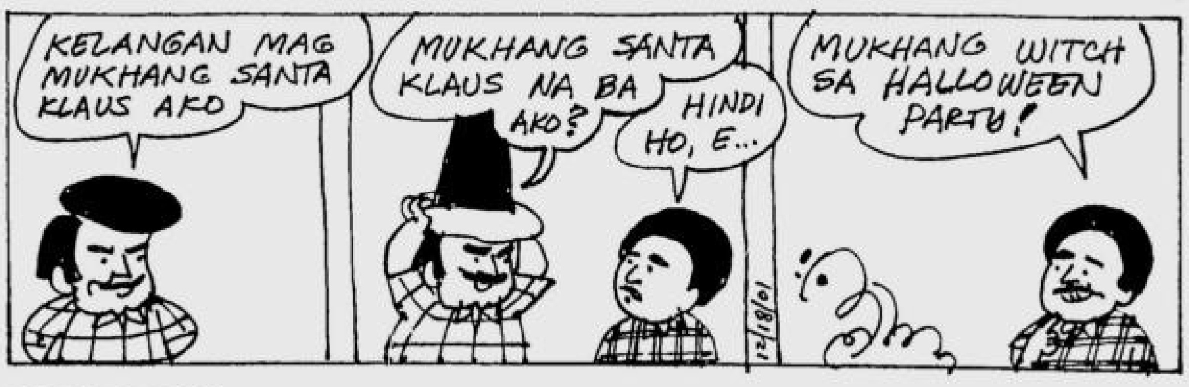
11/2/01

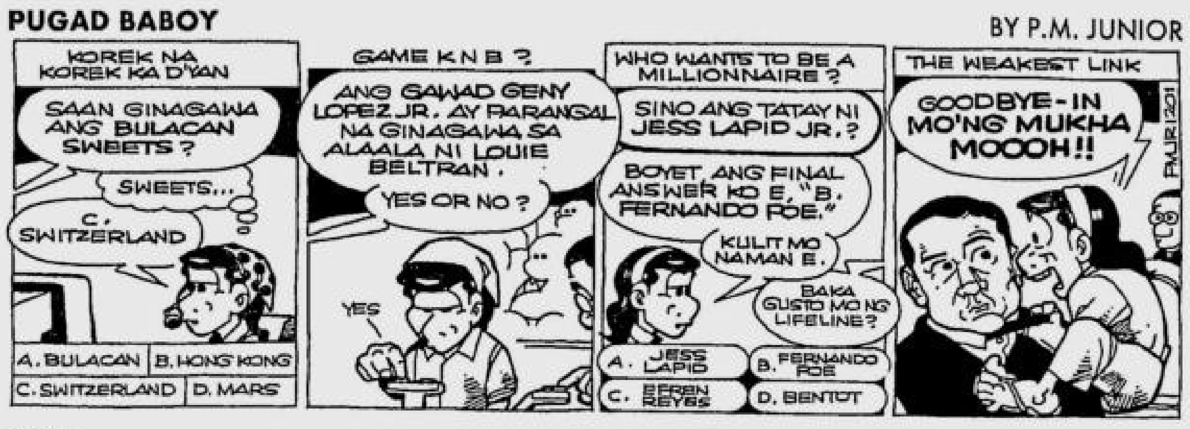
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


KELANGAN MAG MUKHANG SANTA KLAUS AKO
MUKHANG SANTA KLAUS NA BA AKO?
HINDI HO, E...
MUKHANG WITCH SA HALLOWEEN PARTY!
12/18/01

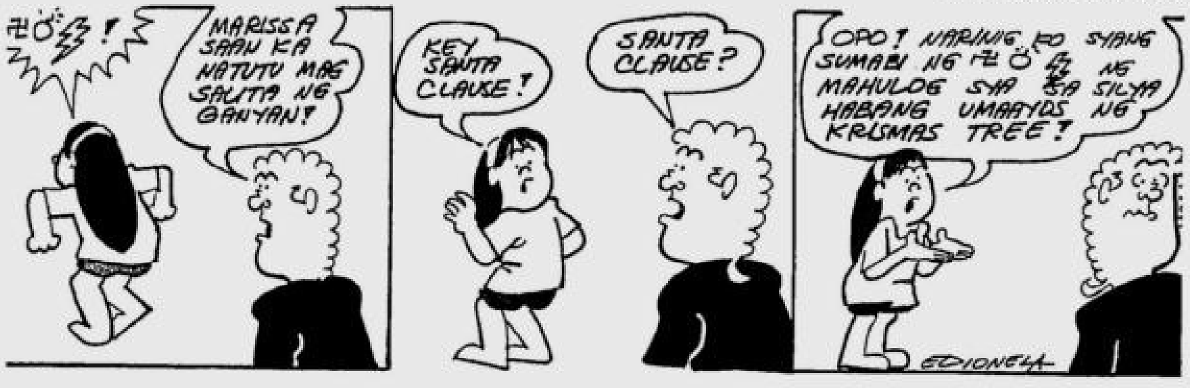
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


KOREK NA KOREK KA D'YAN
SAAN GINAGAWA ANG BULACAN SWEETS?
SWEETS...
C. SWITZERLAND
A. BULACAN
B. HONG KONG
C. SWITZERLAND
D. MARS
GAME K N B ?
ANG GAWAD GENY LOPEZ JR. AY PARANGAL NA GINAGAWA SA ALAALA NI LOUIE BELTRAN.
YES OR NO?
YES
WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONNAIRE?
SINO ANG TATAY NI JESS LAPID JR.?
BOYET, ANG FINAL ANSWER KO E, "B. FERNANDO POE."
KULIT MO NAMAN E.
BAKA GUSTO MO NG LIFELINE?
A. JESS LAPID
B. FERNANDO POE
C. EFREN REYES
D. BENTOT
THE WEAKEST LINK
GOODBYE-IN MO'NG MUKHA MOOOH!!
PMJR12/01

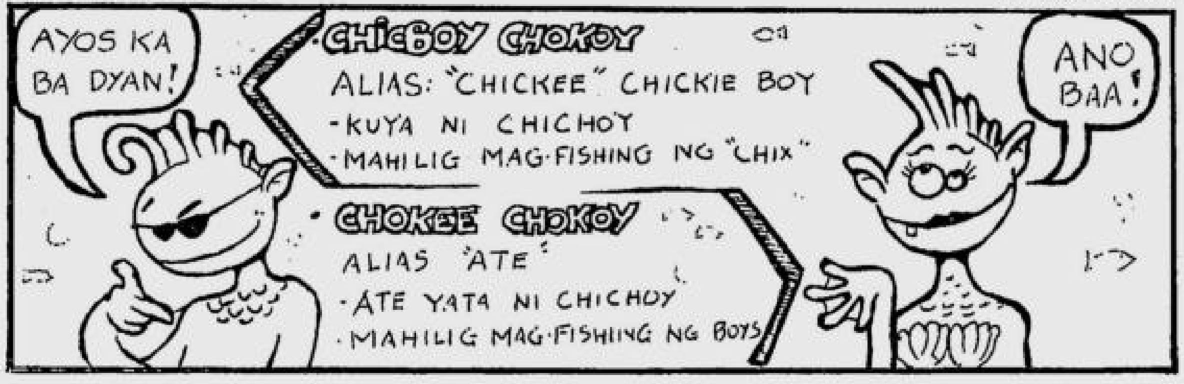
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


MARISSA SAAN KA NATUTO MAG SALITA NG GANYAN?
KEY SANTA CLAUSE?
SANTA CLAUSE?
OPO! NARINIG KO SYANG SUMABI NG MAHULOG SYA SA SILYA HABANG UMAAYOS NG KRISMAS TREE?
EDIONELA

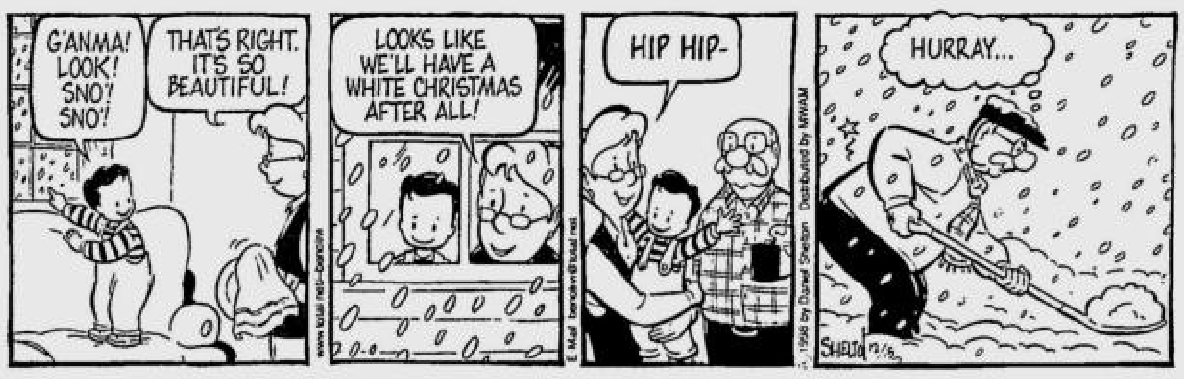
CHICHOY CHOKOY

BY IKOY RICIO


AYOS KA BA DYAN!
CHICBOY CHOKOY
ALIAS: "CHICKEE" CHICKIE BOY
-KUYA NI CHICHOY
-MAHILIG MAG-FISHING NG "CHIX"
CHOKEE CHOKOY
ALIAS "ATE"
-ATE YATA NI CHICHOY
-MAHILIG MAG-FISHING NG BOYS
ANO BAA!

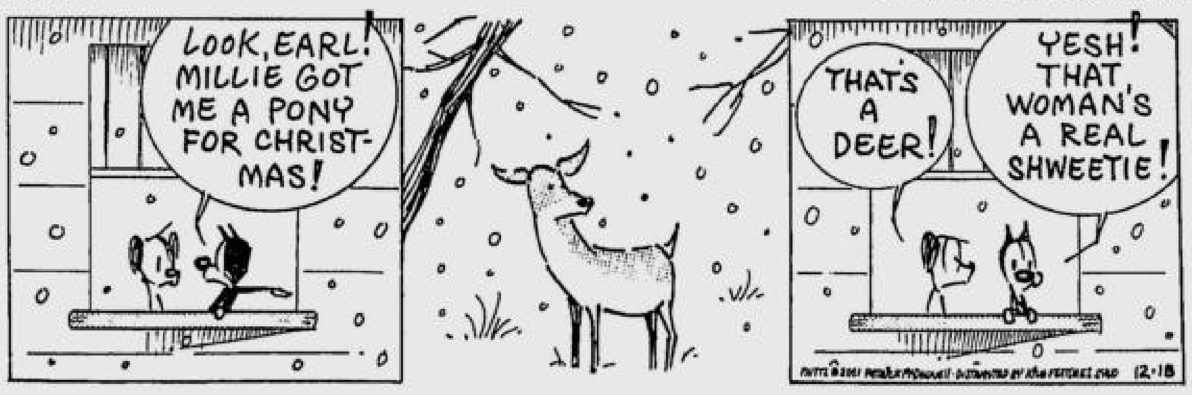
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


G'ANMA! LOOK! SNO'! SNO'!
THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL!
LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE A WHITE CHRISTMAS AFTER ALL!
HIP HIP-
HURRAY...
SHELTON 12/18

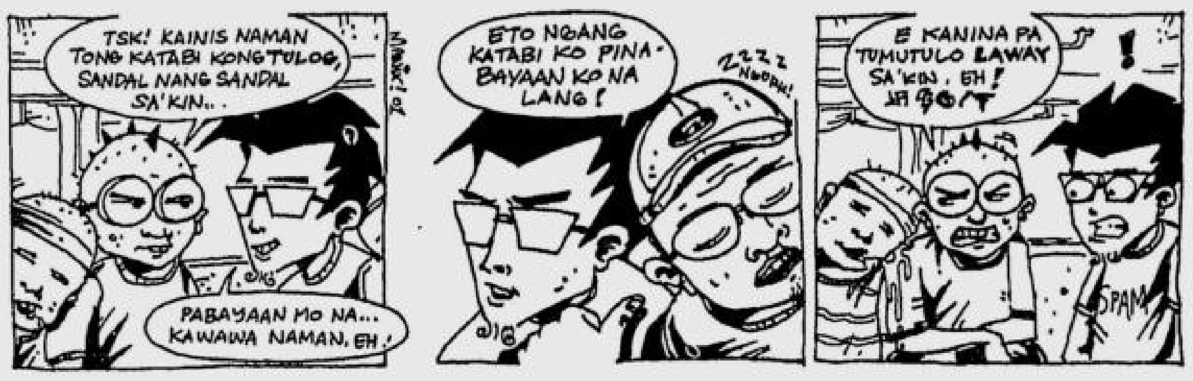
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


LOOK, EARL! MILLIE GOT ME A PONY FOR CHRISTMAS!
THAT'S A DEER!
YESH! THAT WOMAN'S A REAL SHWEETIE!
12-18

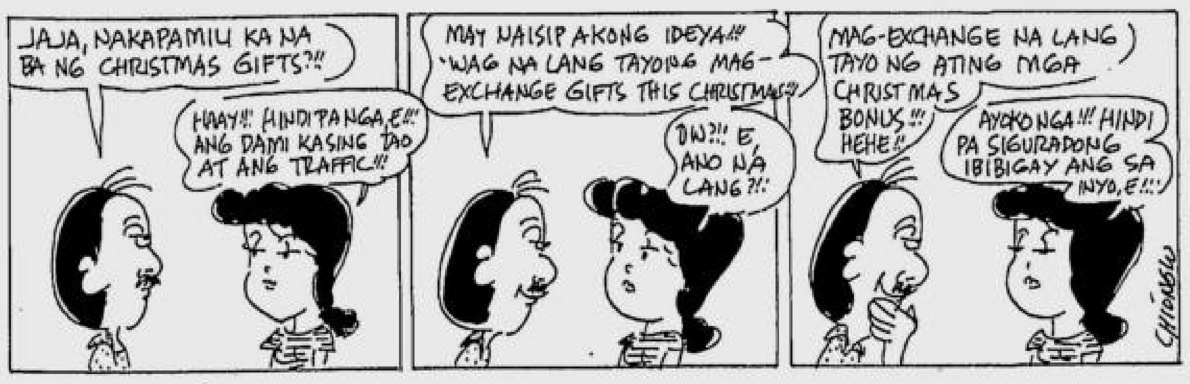
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANUEL ABRERA


TSK! KAINIS NAMAN TONG KATABI KONG TULOG, SANDAL NANG SANDAL SA'KIN..
PABAYAAN MO NA... KAWAWA NAMAN, EH!
ETO NGANG KATABI KO PINA-BAYAAN KO NA LANG!
ZZZZ
E KANINA PA TUMUTULO LAWAY SA'KIN, EH!
SPAM

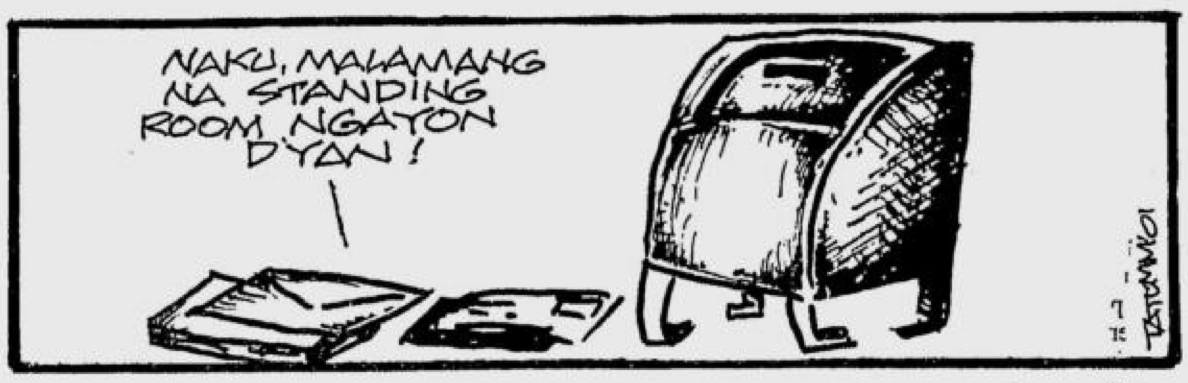
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JAJA, NAKAPAMILI KA NA BA NG CHRISTMAS GIFTS?!!
HAAY!! HINDI PA NGA, E!! ANG DAMI KASING TAO AT ANG TRAFFIC!!
MAY NAISIP AKONG IDEYA!! 'WAG NA LANG TAYONG MAG-EXCHANGE GIFTS THIS CHRISTMAS!!
OW?!! E, ANO NA LANG?!!
MAG-EXCHANGE NA LANG TAYO NG ATING MGA CHRISTMAS BONUS!!! HEHE!!
AYOKO NGA!!! HINDI PA SIGURADONG IBIBIGAY ANG SA INYO, E!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU & TATUM MILAMBILING


NAKU, MALAMANG NA STANDING ROOM NGAYON D'YAN!
TATUM

Lifting and pulling right

Functional training hones particular body parts people use to perform everyday chores like carrying shopping bags or moving boxes

By Alex Y. Vergara

WHAT sets legendary golfer Tiger Woods and members of the British elite Special Forces apart from ordinary mortals? Perhaps nothing much except that they're richer (well, Tiger is) and more physically honed to excel in their respective fields.

Their daily fitness regimens most likely include hours of indoor and outdoor aerobic and weight-training exercises. On top of this, seasoned athletes like Tiger have now reportedly added "functional training" to their list of fitness routines.

Unlike conventional forms of weight training that zero in on specific muscle groups, functional training hones particular body parts people use to perform everyday chores.

"There's no exercise to train one's self to carry, say, a shopping bag or lift luggage into an overhead bin," says John Young, VP-International Sales for Cybex. "Yet we usually do these routine chores every day."

Cybex, a leading manufacturer of commercial strength training, cardiovascular and medical specialty equipment, participated in the recently concluded national meet organized by the Association of Fitness Professionals in the Phils. Young and Cybex consultant Dr. Mark Slavin also introduced the Cybex FT 360 Functional Trainer.

Picking up a heavy shopping bag may seem easy to a muscled gym instructor, but not to an elderly woman suffering from osteoporosis or arthritis. In due time, however, even the gym instructor may find such a seemingly easy task harder. How come?

"Unlike weight-lifting, which makes use of certain muscle groups," says Young, "everyday chores are more complicated to execute since they require a series of bones, joints and muscles. No machine has been designed to address this until now."

Vital parts

The Functional Trainer comes with rotating pulleys attached to two adjustable metal arms that allow users unlimited training variations—from standing exercises to (with the proper attachments) squats and lunges that help strengthen vital parts of the body such as the torso, back, hips, arms and shoulders.

The upright structure may be a tad too big to keep in a private gym, which probably explains why it is popular among commercial and institutional users such as health clubs, fitness centers, hospitals and military establishments. Not a few people afflicted with osteoporosis or those recuperating from falls and accidents have found the Functional Trainer useful in helping them get back on their feet. Thus, the machine is slowly becoming a regular fixture in homes for senior citizens all over the United States.

Aside from the British Special Forces, Cybex, through the Functional Trainer, also caters to the needs of the Australian and Egyptian military. Its newest clients include members of the Singaporean and Peruvian air force. Military men need functional training to help them efficiently lift military provisions and, if worse comes to worst, carry or drag wounded comrades to safety.

Couch potatoes, too

Surprisingly, the user-friendly product, which promotes low-impact exercises, is designed for couch potatoes as well. "The Functional Trainer is also designed to introduce people to the benefits of exercise," says Young. "At the same time, it has also found a niche among baby boomers who are now entering their 50s."

But does the Functional Trainer promote weight reduction as well? Like all machines and fitness programs, it does to a certain extent. "It depends on your goal," says Young. "There's no magic bullet when it comes to losing weight. It requires discipline and a conscious effort to modify one's diet and lifestyle." Even if such a lifestyle involves regularly carrying shopping bags and lifting luggage.

Call Cybex at 826-0751 and 826-2761.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

CYBEX
CYBEX

THE CYBEX Functional Trainer zeroes in on a series of bones, joints and muscles to strengthen the shoulders and upper arms.

CYBEX
CYBEX

FOCUS on the back, right shoulder and arms.

CYBEX
CYBEX

WORKING out to achieve a stronger, firmer trunk.

Church's attempt to conceal truth about Dead Sea Scrolls revealed

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

Part I

A FOREIGN news item in the Nov. 18 issue of the INQUIRER about the controversial Dead Sea Scrolls caught my attention.

The news item said: "The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered with great fanfare in the late 1940s, have finally been published in their entirety, after decades of toil, controversy and scandal.

" 'It's the greatest publication effort of the 20th century,' said Jacob Fisch, executive director of the Friends of Israel Antiquities Authority.

"The scrolls, which have provided archeologists and religious scholars new ways at looking at the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish world of Jesus, have been produced in 37 large tomes by the Oxford University Press."

I have been fascinated by the Dead Sea Scrolls ever since their discovery in 1947 in the Qumran caves near the Dead Sea by two Bedouin tribe shepherds. These scrolls were believed to have been written by a monastic group of religious people known as the Essenes who lived during the time of Christ.

Before this great religious archeological find, the only existing records on the life of Jesus Christ were written by four Christian evangelists namely, Luke, Mark, Matthew and John. The earliest of these so-called Gospels was written at least 50 years after the death of Jesus. Not one of them wrote the gospels during Jesus' lifetime. They wrote from second- or third-hand knowledge. It is not even historically certain whether it is really the evangelists who wrote these stories down or were merely attributed to them.

In time, because of the many translations and misquotations of the gospels from one language to another, we really don't know exactly what Jesus said and what he taught.

With the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the real story about a Teacher of Righteousness who lived during the time of Christ can now be scrutinized by independent and unbiased Biblical scholars. The Vatican has never published such portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls it had acquired and even refused independent scholars to take a look at them. Fortunately, there were photocopies, which enabled Oxford University to finally publish them in their unedited version.

The Scrolls show that the basic tenets of Christianity were taken from Qumran teachings and the Teacher of Righteousness had been identified with Jesus

Upon their discovery, several powerful religious groups, especially the Catholic Church with their own hidden agenda, and religious self-interests, tried to get hold of the scrolls ahead of the others in order to ensure that they do not contradict their traditional or orthodox teachings. The manner in which these religious groups tried to bully one another was a source of great friction and scandal among Biblical scholars and religious historians.

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh wrote in their explosive book, "The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception":

"In tracing the progress of the Dead Sea Scrolls from their discovery in the Judean desert to the various institutions that hold them today, we found ourselves confronting a contradiction we had faced before—the contradiction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. It was to extend to the corridors of the Vatican, and even more ominously, into the offices of the Inquisition.

"We also encountered a rigidly maintained 'consensus' of interpretation toward the content, and dating of the scrolls, and came to understand how explosive a nonpartisan examination of them might be for the whole of Christian theological tradition. And we discovered how fiercely the world of orthodox biblical scholarship was prepared to fight to retain its monopoly of available information."

The purpose for all this was to ensure that no one will be able to question the official church's interpretation. But many queries had remained unanswered. There were many puzzles left hanging.

"At the center of the puzzle, we were to discover," according to authors Baigent and Leigh, "was a hither to unknown connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the elusive figure of St. James, Jesus' brother, whose dispute with Paul precipitated the formulation of the new religions subsequently known as Christianity. It was this link that had been painstakingly concealed by a small enclave of biblical scholars, whose conveniently orthodox interpretation of the scrolls Eisenman came to call the 'consensus.' "

Robert Eisenman was chair of the Department of Religious Studies and professor of Middle East religions at California State University in Long Beach. He obtained his doctorate in Middle East Languages and Cultures from Columbia University.

"The result [of this official consensus] has been the upholding of an official orthodoxy of interpretation—a framework of assumptions and conclusions which, to outsiders, appears to have the solidity of established and undisputed fact." In truth, however, they were based on conjectures, preconceptions and reconstructions. Since this small group controlled the crucial source of information, they regulated the flow of information to serve their own purposes.

"To challenge those interpretations," continued the authors, "is to find oneself labeled, at best, a crank, at worst, a renegade, apostate or heretic." That's why very few scholars dared to hurl such a challenge—except Eisenman. And his daring scholarship and exposé provided the impetus for the book "The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception."

It used to be believed that the teachings of Jesus were unique, that he originated a new religion that has become known as Christianity, which had no parallel in history. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, this position has become untenable. The scrolls prove that the basic tenets of Christianity were directly borrowed or taken from the Qumran teachings and the Teacher of Righteousness became identified later on with Jesus.

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza I, 106 Legaspi St., Greenbelt, Makati City or e-mail jlicauco@geocities.com. Visit my website at www.angelfire.com/licauco. Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.

This season of love, soothe the abused...

New HOMEDICS

Luxury Foot Bubble Spa

'Tis the best time to take notice of one of the most abused parts of our body - **our FEET!** And Homedics bubble spa offers the best ways to pamper them, with its soothing features to enhance your footcare indulgence...

Gentle Massage

Hundreds of nodules stimulate the soles.

Invigorating Warm Bubbles

Thousands of warm bubbles help release muscle tension.

Unique Serpentine bubble track provides **Double the Bubbles to Double the Pleasure!**

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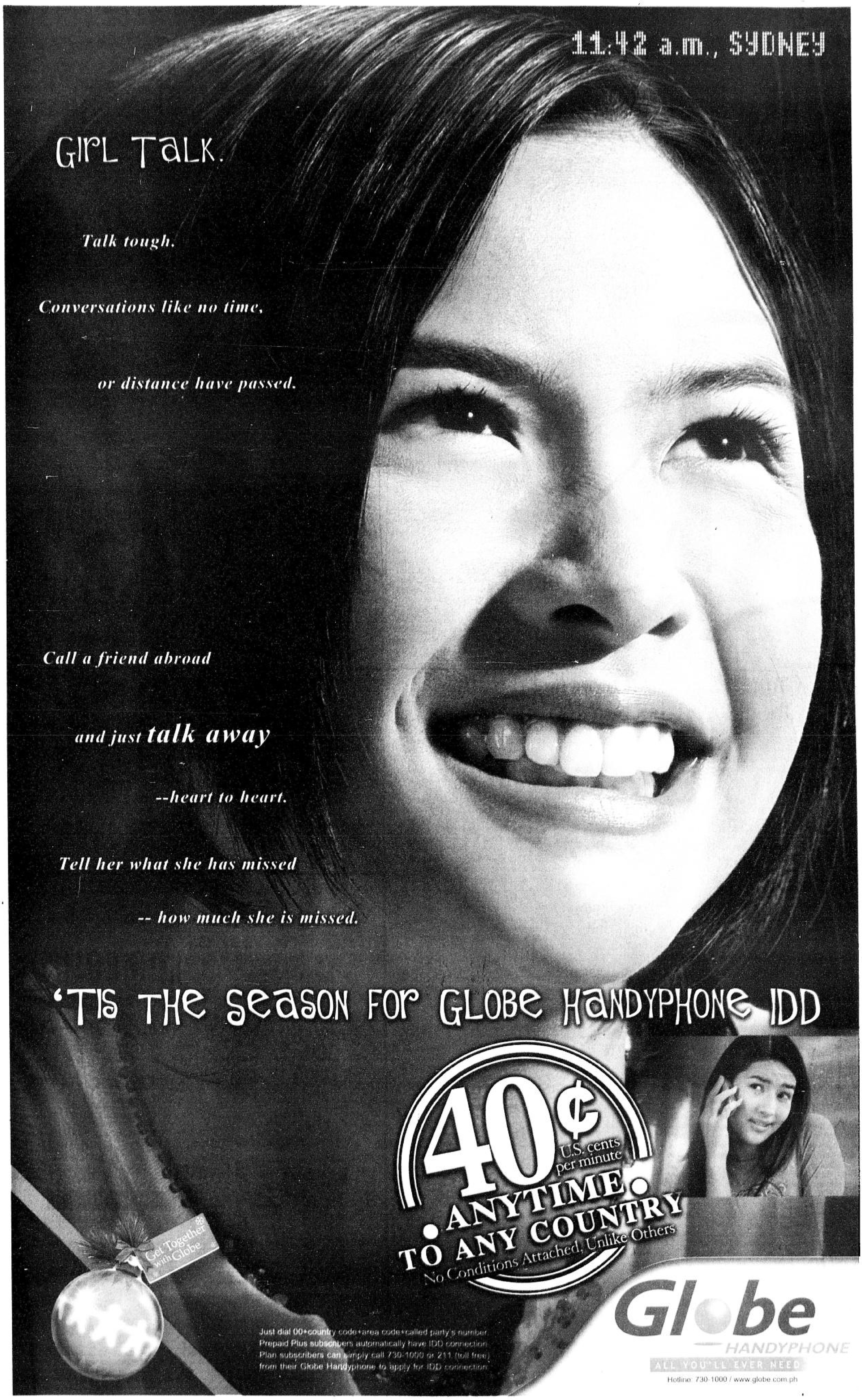
11:42 a.m., SYDNEY
GIRL TALK.
Talk tough.
Conversations like no time,
or distance have passed.
Call a friend abroad
and just talk away
--heart to heart.
Tell her what she has missed
-- how much she is missed.
'TIS THE SEASON FOR GLOBE HANDYPHONE IDD
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U.S. cents per minute
ANYTIME
TO ANY COUNTRY
No Conditions Attached, Unlike Others
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